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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

FINANCE DOCKET NO. 34395

CITY OF PEORIA, IL, d/b/a PEORIA, PEORIA HEIGHTS & WESTERN RAILROAD -
CONSTRUCTION OF CONNECTING TRACK EXEMPTION -
IN PEORIA COUNTY, IL

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CONCLUSION

The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in response to a verified notice filed by the City of Peoria, IL, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) which seeks an exemption under 49 CFR 1150.36. The EA considers the potential environmental impacts of PPHW's proposed construction and operation of approximately 1,800 feet of track in Peoria, Peoria County, IL, over land that it owns or over which it has an easement for railroad purposes.

Based on the information provided from all sources to date and its independent analysis, SEA preliminarily concludes that construction and operation of the proposed connecting track would have no significant environmental impacts if the Board imposes and PPHW implements the recommended mitigation measures set forth in the EA. Therefore, an environmental impact statement process is unnecessary in this proceeding.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES 1.0 INTRODUCTION

On February 3, 2004, the City of Peoria, IL, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western (PPHW), filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.36 to construct approximately 1,800 feet of track in Peoria, Peoria County, IL, over land that it owns or over which it has an easement for railroad purposes. The track to be constructed would connect a 1.9-mile segment of track that the City of Peoria (the City) purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) with an 8.29-mile segment of track known as the Keller Branch that the City acquired from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company (Rock Island).

On August 28, 2003, and pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.10(c), the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) granted PPHW's request for waiver of the six-month prefiling notice generally required for construction projects under 49 CFR 1105.10(a)(1). Subsequently, on September 5, 2003, SEA granted PPHW's request to submit a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) in lieu of the environmental and historic report required under 49 CFR 1105.7 and 1105.8 when filing an application, petition, or notice of exemption seeking construction authority from the Board.¹

SEA prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate the potential environmental impacts that may result from PPHW's proposed construction and operation of approximately 1,800 ft of new rail line on property which it already owns, or over which it has an easement, in Peoria, Illinois.

ES 2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED PPHW CONSTRUCTION

PPHW believes that its proposed action will enhance operating efficiencies and public safety by diverting train traffic over this new connecting track instead of using the Keller Branch which runs through the City utilizing its 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings. Additionally, PPHW believes that, if approved, that following the construction of this new connecting track, that the approximate 6.7 miles of the Keller Branch would no longer be required for the provision of rail service to shippers.

ES 3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

(See Chapter 3 for details)

As stated above, PPHW's proposes to construct and operate over approximately 1,800 ft of new rail line on property which it already owns, or over which it has an easement, in Peoria, Illinois.

¹Because PPHW proposes to construct a connecting track over land owned by the connecting railroad, this action requires SEA to prepare an Environmental Assessment pursuant to the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.6(b)(1). If, during the environmental review process, it becomes clear that potentially significant adverse environmental effects could not be adequately mitigated would result from this project, SEA would then be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

ES 3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION

PPHW filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.36 to construct approximately 1,800 feet of track in Peoria, Peoria County, IL, over land that it owns or over which it has an easement for railroad purposes. The track to be constructed would connect a 1.9-mile segment of track that the City of Peoria (the City) purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) with an 8.29-mile segment of track known as the Keller Branch that the City acquired from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company (Rock Island).

The former UP segment connects at its west end with a UP main line that extends in a generally north-south direction between Nelson, IL, and St. Louis, MO. It was acquired by the City in 2001 and there are no active shippers currently located on that segment.

The former Rock Island segment was acquired by the City in 1984 from the Rock Island Trustee. It connects at its east end with a rail line of the Peoria & Pekin Union Railway Company (P&PU). P&PU initially operated the segment pursuant to a lease from the City. Thereafter, the Village of Peoria Heights, IL, acquired a 25-percent interest in the segment, which was referred to under the doing-business designation of PPHW. In 1998, Pioneer Industrial Railway Co., the current operator, began operations over the segment pursuant to an assignment of P&PU's lease from the City (consented to by the Village of Peoria Heights). There are three active shippers located on the segment, two of which are located near its northwestern end and one of which is located near its southeastern end.

The proposed alignment is located adjacent to an active industrial area in which no residences are located. However, the proposed rail alignment would result in the construction of a new at-grade crossing at University Street, which, in 2003 had an average daily traffic (ADT) of approximately 8,000.

There are currently three active shippers on the Keller Branch: Carver Lumber and Peoria Plastics are located near its northwestern end and O'Brien Steel is located near the southeastern end. Following construction of the proposed 1,800 ft of connecting rail, the two shippers located near the northwestern end of the Keller Branch will be served from the west by a rail carrier with whom the City of Peoria would enter into an operating agreement. While the lone shipper located near the southeastern end of the Keller Branch will be served from the southeast by the same or a different rail operator.

ES 3.2 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, PPHW would not construct approximately 1,800 feet of new rail line the connecting track, and would therefore, continue to move rail traffic through the downtown area over its existing alignment. The 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings would continue to be used.

ES 4.0 THE BOARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Board is a nonpartisan, decisionally independent adjudicatory body, which is organizationally housed within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Board has jurisdiction over certain rail transportation matters such as rail rates, financial transactions, the licensing of new

railroad operations, rail construction projects, and the abandonment of rail service. The Board licenses railroads as common carriers, requiring them to accept goods and materials for transport from all customers upon reasonable request. The Board is also authorized to exempt entities from the regulatory requirements of Section 10901 pursuant to its broad authority to issue exemptions conferred by 49 U.S.C. § 10502.

In conducting environmental reviews, the Board considers the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations of the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ); other related environmental laws and their implementing regulations; and the former Interstate Commerce Commission environmental regulations at 49 CFR 1105, which the Board has adopted.

ES 5.0 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

SEA is responsible for conducting the environmental review of the proposed PPHW rail line construction and operation on behalf of the Board. On September 5, 2003, SEA granted PPHW's request to submit a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) in lieu of the environmental and historic report required under 49 CFR 1105.7 and 1105.8 when filing an application, petition, or notice of exemption seeking construction authority from the Board. SEA's participation, oversight, and guidance have been extensive throughout the process of developing the PDEA. SEA has conducted an extensive independent review of the information submitted by PPHW. PPHW submitted its PDEA to SEA on February 26, 2004.

The PDEA has served as an administrative draft for SEA, who used it to prepare this Environmental Assessment (EA). SEA independently reviewed the PDEA, which includes appropriate recommendations to the Board to mitigate potential environmental impacts. See Agency coordination letters in Appendix D. SEA prepared and is now issuing this EA (based upon the PDEA) for public review and comment. Consulting with other government agencies and involving the public are critical components of SEA's environmental review process: SEA considered Federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders, and then coordinated and consulted with appropriate agencies to ensure that they were notified of the proposed action. After SEA considers all public comments received on this EA (including comments on the recommended mitigation), reviews all other available environmental information, and conducts additional environmental analysis where appropriate, SEA will prepare a Post EA containing SEA's final environmental analysis and recommended environmental mitigation. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, including the EA, Post EA, and all public comments before making its final decision on PPHW's Notice of Exemption.

ES 6.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

SEA carefully assessed the extent and potential significance of the following environmental impact areas:

- transportation systems, including local roadways, highways/rail at-grade crossings, safety, traffic delay, and emergency response delay;
- social and economic effects;
- physiography and soils;
- water resources;

- biological resources;
- land use;
- energy;
- navigation;
- air quality;
- noise;
- cultural resources;
- recreational and visual resources;
- environmental justice; and
- cumulative effects.

During its environmental review, conducted to date, SEA did not identify any significant impacts in the areas studied. Table ES–1 summarizes the results of this EA.

Based on the information available to date, consultations with appropriate agencies, and extensive environmental analysis, SEA developed preliminary environmental mitigation measures to address the environmental impacts of the proposed construction and operation of the connecting track.

SEA emphasizes that the recommended environmental mitigation measures in the EA are preliminary and it invites public and agency comments on these proposed environmental mitigation measures. In order for SEA to effectively assess the comments, it is helpful if the public is specific regarding desired mitigation and the reasons for it.

SEA preliminarily recommends that the Board impose the following mitigation measures in any decision approving the proposed construction and operation of connecting track in this proceeding.

PPHW’s Voluntary Mitigation Measures

Based on traffic delay analysis, the following conclusions and recommendations are made concerning the proposed railroad crossing:

- The Highway-Rail Grade Crossing sign, commonly identified as the Crossbuck sign, should be installed on each University Street approach. The details of the signs can be found in Part 8 of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Millennium Edition.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (100 ft) sign should be installed on the southwest drive to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing on University Street soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the proposed University Street grade crossing and the northeast and northwest driveways (50 ft and 30 ft, respectively) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (nine vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on each driveway.
- Essentially no storage exists between the proposed tracks and the northwest driveway on University Street. Consideration for closure of this drive should be given. As the traffic

volume on University Street grows, relocating the northeast driveway to the north to have a minimum of 200 ft distance from the centerline of the proposed railroad crossing could be considered.

- Based on the low amount of projected train traffic on the proposed railroad extension, combined with the low operating speed of the train the MUTCD does not warrant any active traffic control device at the proposed University Street crossing. However, if there is no illumination at the grade during the night hours, installing an active control device such as Flashing-Light signals could be considered.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (65 ft) sign should be installed on the closest northeast drive on North Allen Road to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the North Allen Road grade crossing and the closest northeast drive (65 ft) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (18 vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on the driveway.

SEA's Additional Mitigation Measures

Transportation and Safety

1. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) shall consult with the Illinois Department of Transportation and Peoria County prior to installation of the University Street highway/rail at-grade crossing order to minimize traffic delay during at-grade crossing construction.
2. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult with the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Department of Transportation regarding its proposed voluntary mitigation measures and the selection of appropriate highway/rail at-grade warning protection and report the results of this consultation to SEA.
3. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) or its designated contractor shall consult with the appropriate public transportation agencies prior to the scheduling of lane restrictions or road closures, as well as detour approvals. PPHW or its designated contractor shall be responsible for the cost of all permits, detours, coordination with local officials and agencies, and public notifications related to temporary lane restrictions or road closures.
4. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consider maintenance of emergency response capabilities and school bus schedules in planning and executing the necessary road work.

Land Use

5. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall ensure that all areas disturbed by project-related construction activities which are not located on the railroad's property (such as access roads, haul roads, etc.) are promptly restored as closely to their original condition, as is practical, following conclusion of project-related construction activities at that site.

Water Resources

6. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult with the appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies with regard to implementation of techniques to minimize impacts to wetlands and water bodies.
7. In instances in which the City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) uses contractors to apply herbicides, for right-of-way maintenance, PPHW shall use only contractors trained in herbicide application and shall require those contractors to follow label directions in applying herbicides and limit the amount potentially entering waterways. PPHW shall require contractors to use only herbicides regulated for such uses with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and follow all state regulations that requires their use.

Biological Resources

8. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall use Best Management Practices to control erosion, runoff, and surface instability during construction activities.

Air Quality

9. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult and comply with all applicable Federal, state, and local regulations regarding the control of fugitive dust. Fugitive dust emissions created during construction and abandonment activities shall be minimized by using such control methods as water spraying, installation of wind barriers, and chemical treatment.

Noise

10. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall control temporary noise from equipment used during construction activities through the use and maintenance of muffler systems on machinery.

Cultural Resources

11. If the City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) discovers any undiscovered archaeological remains or other cultural resources during construction activities, PPHW shall immediately cease work, and contact the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency regarding appropriate measures to protect the resource.

ES 7.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Based on the information provided from all sources to date and its independent analysis, SEA preliminarily concludes that the construction and operation of the proposed connecting track would have no significant environmental impacts if the Board imposes and PPHW implements the mitigation recommended above. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary in this proceeding.

SEA specifically invites comments on all aspects of this EA, including suggestions for additional mitigation measures. SEA will consider all comments received in response to the EA in making its final recommendations to the Board. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, SEA's final recommendations, including final recommended mitigation measures, and the environmental comments in making its final decision in this proceeding.

Comments (an original and two copies) should be sent to the following address:

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20423-0001

The following information should appear in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope:

Attention: Troy Brady
Finance Docket No. 34395

Questions may also be directed to Mr. Troy Brady at this address or by telephoning (202) 565-1643.

Date made available to the public: March 9, 2004
Comment due date: April 8, 2004

ES 8.0 GUIDE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This EA evaluates the potential environmental impacts that could result from the PPHW's proposed rail line construction and operation. The Surface Transportation Board, Section of Environmental Analysis, has prepared this document in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA; the Board's environmental rules (49 CFR Part 1105); and other applicable environmental statutes and regulations.

Table ES-1. Summary of Environmental Analysis Results

Impact Area	Results of Analysis	Type of Impact
Land Use	The property has historically been devoted to industrial uses. The State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources states that the proposed project, as described, should not result in any negative adverse environmental impacts to rare or unique natural features.	No significant negative impacts
	This location for the proposed new connecting track was selected because of existing infrastructure, connections, and close proximity to Class I railroads and the possibility of future industrial growth in Peoria.	No significant negative impacts
Socio-economics	The proposed PPHW actions would result in the direct hiring of employees and indirectly result in the potential creation of new jobs in the future.	Positive impacts
Physiography and Soils	The proposed rail line would not exacerbate any existing soil contamination or adversely impact prime farmland.	No impacts
Water and Wetlands	No adverse impacts to surface waters or wetlands are expected.	No impacts
	No wetlands would be adversely impacted by the proposed rail line construction, and therefore no Section 404 permits will be required.	No impacts
Biological Resources	Groundwater would not be adversely impacted by the proposed construction.	No impacts
	Due to the lack of flora and fauna along the right-of-way of the proposed construction, the proposed construction would not result in any adverse impacts to biological resources, including critical habitat, endangered or threatened species, wildlife refuges, parks, or forests.	No impacts
Transportation	University Street has an average daily traffic of approximately 8,000 and will require the installation of a new at-grade active crossing protection system which may result in minor impacts to emergency vehicle response.	No significant negative impacts
	North Allen Road has an average daily traffic of approximately 14,000 and will require reactivation of an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing which may result in minor impacts to emergency vehicle response.	No significant negative impacts
	Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossing Delay - The increased delay resulting from the installation of this new active at-grade crossing protection system at University Street would not significantly increase vehicle delay. The maximum change in average delay is 0.35 seconds per vehicle, meaning the activation of this highway/rail at-grade crossing an average of two times per week will not result in a significant reduction in the level of service.	No significant negative impacts

Table ES-1. Summary of Environmental Analysis Results (continued)

Impact Area	Results of Analysis	Type of Impact
Transportation (Continued)	Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossing Delay - The increased delay resulting from the reactivation of an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing at North Allen Road would not significantly increase vehicle delay. The maximum change in average delay is 0.39 seconds per vehicle, meaning the reactivation of this highway/rail at-grade crossing an average of two times per week will not result in a significant reduction in the level of service.	No significant negative impacts
	Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossing Safety - would be enhanced due to diversion of rail traffic from the Keller Branch running through downtown Peoria and use of its 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings.	Significant positive impacts
Energy	The proposed actions would have a positive effect on overall energy. By increasing efficiency and reducing traffic delays overall, resulting the diversion of rail traffic from the Keller Branch running through downtown Peoria and use of its 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings.	Positive impacts
Navigation	Not applicable to this project.	Not studied
Air Quality	The emissions resulting from the proposed action compared with the EPA's thresholds found that the proposed rail line construction would not result in adverse impacts to air quality in Peoria County.	No significant negative impacts
Noise	No sensitive noise receptors have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the proposed actions.	No significant negative impacts
Cultural Resources	There are no historic structures or archaeological sites that would be affected by the construction of the project.	No impacts
Recreational and Visual Resources	The proposed rail line construction has the potential to contribute greatly to increasing the recreational opportunities for the residents of Peoria County. The City of Peoria has stated that if the proposed construction is approved and completed that it will seek authority from the Board to abandon 6.7 miles of the Keller Branch for development of a recreational trail.	Positive impacts
Environmental Justice	No disproportionately high or adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations have been identified.	No impacts
Cumulative Effects	No other proposed projects have been identified that would result in cumulative effects warranting study.	No impacts

CHAPTER 1.0
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1.0

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter describes the purpose and need for the proposed construction and operation of over new connecting track as requested by the City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW). This chapter also describes the environmental review process for the proposed project and discusses SEA's role in conducting the environmental review. Chapter 1 also highlights the role of other Federal, State, and local agencies, parties of record, communities, and other interested parties.

1.1 BOARD JURISDICTION OVER PPHW'S PROJECT

On February 3, 2004, the City of Peoria, IL, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western (PPHW), filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.36 to construct approximately 1,800 feet of track in Peoria, Peoria County, IL, over land that it owns or over which it has an easement for railroad purposes. The track to be constructed would connect a 1.9-mile segment of track that the City of Peoria (the City) purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) with an 8.29-mile segment of track known as the Keller Branch that the City acquired from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company (Rock Island).

On August 28, 2003, and pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.10(c), the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) granted PPHW's request for waiver of the six-month prefiling notice generally required for construction projects under 49 CFR 1105.10(a)(1). Subsequently, on September 5, 2003, SEA granted PPHW's request to submit a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) in lieu of the environmental and historic report required under 49 CFR 1105.7 and 1105.8 when filing an application, petition, or notice of exemption seeking construction authority from the Board.

Before it can issue a final decision on the merits of PPHW's Notice, the Board must comply with all Federal environmental requirements that are applicable. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR Part 1105, the Board is required to conduct and complete an environmental review of PPHW's proposed action. In that regard, SEA has decided to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with its Part 1105 rules.

The Board has jurisdiction under Section 10901 of the Act over the construction of exempt connecting track as it relates to interstate commerce, which requires that rail lines may be constructed and operated only after the Board has issued a certificate pursuant to the procedures set forth in that statute. The Board also has jurisdiction under provision of the Act, 49 U.S.C. § 10502, to exempt from its regulatory control matters, including the acquisition and operation of rail lines, where the criteria for exemption, as set forth in that statute and noted above, are met. Accordingly, this EA considers the environmental impacts of the proposed construction and operation of PPHW's new connecting track, which it claims is subject to the Board's jurisdiction and which it also claims satisfies the statutory criteria for exemption.

This EA considers the potential adverse environmental impacts of PPHW's proposed action on the environment resulting from its construction and operation. At the same time, however, there

are limits to the Board's authority to impose mitigation. The Board cannot impose mitigation with respect to matters that are outside of its regulatory control.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The proposed project is located in the City of Peoria, Peoria County, Illinois (see Figure 1 - Appendix A). PPHW is proposing to construct approximately 1,800 ft of new connecting track over land which it owns, or over which it has an easement. The proposed new connecting track would join two segments of rail line currently owned by PPHW: 1) 1.9 miles of rail line recently purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company, and 2) the 8.29 mile long Keller Branch acquired from the former Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company in 1984. The proposed alignment is located adjacent to an active industrial area in which no residences are located. However, it is noted that the proposed construction would result in the construction of a new highway/rail at-grade crossing at University Street, which, in 2003 had an average daily traffic (ADT) of approximately 8,000 vehicles, and the reactivation of an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing at North Allen Road, which in 2001 had an ADT of approximately 14,000 vehicles.

Lastly, there are currently three active shippers on the Keller Branch: Carver Lumber and Peoria Plastics are located near its northwestern end and O'Brien Steel is located near the southeastern end. Following construction of the proposed 1,800 ft of connecting rail, it is proposed that the two shippers located near the northwestern end of the Keller Branch be served from the west by a rail carrier with whom the City of Peoria would enter into an operating agreement. It is proposed that the lone shipper, O'Brien Steel, located near the southeastern end of the Keller Branch would be served from the southeast by the same or a different rail operator.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

PPHW believes that its proposed action will enhance operating efficiencies and public safety by diverting train traffic over this new connecting track instead of using the Keller Branch which runs through the City utilizing its 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings. Additionally, PPHW believes that, if approved, that following the construction of this new connecting track, that the approximate 6.7 miles of the Keller Branch would no longer be required for the provision of rail service to shippers.

1.4 HISTORY AND STATUS OF PROCEEDING

The City of Peoria is proposing to construct approximately 1,800 ft of rail line over land that it owns in order to connect a segment of rail that it recently purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) with rail line that it acquired in 1984 from the bankrupt Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company (Rock Island).

The former UP segment is approximately 1.9 miles long. It connects at its west terminus with a UP main line that extends in a generally north-south direction between Nelson, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. It was acquired by the City of Peoria by notice of exemption in STB Finance Docket No. 34066, City of Peoria, Illinois – Acquisition and Operation Exemption – Union Pacific Railroad Company, served July 25, 2001. No active shippers are currently located on that segment.

The former Rock Island segment is known as the Keller Branch. It is 8.29 miles long. It was acquired by the City of Peoria in 1984 from the Rock Island Trustee after its abandonment. It

connects at its east terminus with a rail line of the Peoria & Pekin Union Railway Company (P&PU). The P&PU initially operated the Branch pursuant to lease from the City of Peoria. See Peoria and Pekin Union Railway Company – Exemption form 49 U.S.C. 10901, 1984 ICC LEXIS 275, ICC Finance Docket No. 30545, notice of exemption dated September 18, 1984. Thereafter the Village of Peoria Heights, Illinois acquired a 25 percent interest in the Keller Branch, at which time ownership was referred to under the doing-business-as-designation of Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (P, PH&W). In 1998, the Keller Branch began to be operated by its current operator, Pioneer Industrial Railway Co. (Pioneer), pursuant to an assignment of P&PU's lease from the City of Peoria, consented to by the Village of Peoria Heights. See Pioneer Industrial Railway Co. – Lease and Operation Exemption – Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad, 1998 STB LEXIS 1417, STB Finance Docket 33549, notice of exemption served February 20, 1998. There are three active shippers located on the Keller Branch, two of which are located near its northwestern terminus and one of which is located near its southeastern terminus.

After construction of connecting rail line is completed, if approved, it is proposed that the two shippers located near the northwestern terminus of the Branch be served from the west by a rail carrier with whom the City of Peoria would enter into an operating agreement. It is proposed that at that time the shipper located near the southeastern terminus of the Keller Branch be served from the southeast by the same or a different rail operator. Once the construction is complete, PPHW believes that the approximate 6.7 miles of the Keller Branch would no longer be required for the provision of rail service to shippers and that this portion of the Keller Branch be railbanked and used for a recreational trail following its approval for abandonment.

CHAPTER 2.0
OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS
AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 2.0

OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This chapter will provide an overview of the Board's role, and that of other parties, in the Environmental Review process, as well as information about public participation.

2.1 ROLE OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

This section describes the Board's role regulating railroad matters.

2.1.1 The Surface Transportation Board

The Board is a nonpartisan, decisional independent adjudicatory body, which is organizationally housed within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Board has jurisdiction over certain rail transportation matters such as rail rates, financial transactions, the licensing of new railroad operations, rail construction projects, and the abandonment of rail service. The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) Termination Act of 1995 established the Board to assume some of the rail regulatory functions that the former ICC had administered. This Act either eliminated or transferred other ICC regulatory functions to other agencies. The Board's charge is to provide an efficient and effective forum for the resolution of disputes within its jurisdiction. In all of its decisions, the Board is committed to advancing the national transportation policy goals established by Congress.

The Board licenses railroads as common carriers, requiring them to accept goods and materials for transport from all customers upon reasonable request. Under 49 U.S.C. § 10901, the Board is authorized to grant applications for certificates allowing parties to provide transportation over extended or additional rail lines and must grant such applications unless it finds that such activities are inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity.

Such exemptions must be issued upon a finding by the Board that application of regulatory requirements "is not necessary to carry out the transportation policy of Section 10101 of this title" and either "the transaction or service is of limited scope" or "the application in whole or part of the provision is not needed to protect shippers from the abuse of market power." As described in Section 1, PPHW has petitioned the Board to assess whether or not to issue a regulatory exemption with respect to its proposed construction and operation over connecting track.

In conducting its environmental review, the Board considers the requirements of NEPA and the implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ); other related environmental laws and their implementing regulations; and the former ICC environmental regulations at 49 CFR 1105, which the Board has adopted.

2.1.2 Role of SEA

SEA is responsible for conducting the environmental review of PPHW's proposed rail construction and operation and related activities on behalf of the Board. In accordance with CEQ regulations, 40 CFR. 1506.5(b), SEA granted PPHW's request to submit a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) in lieu of the environmental and historic report required under 49 CFR 1105.7 and 1105.8 when filing an application, petition, or notice of exemption seeking construction authority from the Board. The PDEA has served as an administrative draft for SEA who used it to prepare this Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment. SEA's participation, oversight, and guidance have been extensive throughout the process of developing this EA. In effect, PPHW and their environmental contractor, Hanson Professional Services Inc., has served as an extension of SEA's staff and SEA has exercised its independent judgment in connection with the environmental analysis.

Consulting with other government agencies and involving the public are important to SEA's environmental review process. SEA considered Federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders, and it coordinated and consulted with appropriate agencies to ensure that they were notified of the proposed action. After SEA considers all public comments received on this EA (including the recommended mitigation), reviews all other available environmental information, and conducts additional environmental analysis where appropriate, SEA will prepare a Post Environmental Assessment (Post EA) containing SEA's final environmental analysis and recommended environmental mitigation. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, including the EA, Post EA, and all public comments to make its final decision of PPHW's Notice of Exemption.

2.2 ROLES OF OTHER PARTIES

2.2.1 PPHW

PPHW has provided information to SEA on its proposed railroad construction and operation proceedings and anticipated environmental effects. Throughout the process, SEA has provided appropriate oversight and guidance to PPHW and its environmental effects, and verifications of analysis results. If the Board exempts the proposed action with conditions, including environmental conditions, PPHW would be responsible for implementing any conditions the Board may impose.

2.2.2 Other Agencies

Agency consultation activities were conducted to inform public agencies about the proposed action. Consultations were made with appropriate Federal, State, and local public agencies through correspondence (see Appendix C). Data and information was gathered about the study area and the comments that the public agencies submitted were carefully assessed. SEA will carefully consider the comments of other agencies in preparing the Post EA and in recommending mitigation to the Board, which will exercise its authority with due regard for its own jurisdiction and the jurisdiction and expertise of other Federal agencies.

1. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – The EPA has broad oversight and implementing responsibilities for many environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act; and Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act.

2. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (The Corps) – The Corps is responsible for maintaining and operating certain navigation and flood control projects. In addition, under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the Corps is responsible for regulating the discharge of dredge and fill materials into the nation’s waters, including wetlands.
3. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) – National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic and cultural resources.
4. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – FWS is the Federal agency with primary responsibility for fish, wildlife, and natural resources issues. FWS is also responsible of implementing the Endangered Species Act, and through its regional offices, for consulting with other Federal agencies on potential impacts on threatened and endangered species.
5. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – This agency, formerly the Soil Conservation Service, is charged with protecting farmlands, particularly those classified as prime, unique, or of state or local importance.
6. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – FEMA identifies 100-year floodplains. Consultation with FEMA is intended to verify compliance with the national Flood Insurance Act of 1988 and Executive Order 11988 on national Floodplain Insurance, concerning construction in floodplains.

In addition, comments have been requested from the following Illinois State agencies, local governments and organizations with respect to highway, natural resources and other potential impacts of the PPHW proposal:

- Illinois Department of Transportation;
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources;
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency;
- Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency;
- Illinois State Historic Society;
- Illinois Natural History Survey;
- Illinois Nature Preserves Commission;
- City of Peoria;
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission;
- Peoria Historical Society;
- Peoria County Highway Department; and
- Village of Peoria Heights.

Several of these parties have submitted comments in response to consultation. These comments are included in Appendix C.

2.3 THRESHOLDS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Table 2-1 outlines the Board's thresholds for environmental analysis, as set forth in Part 1105. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, PPHW's proposed action will not result in any new rail traffic, but will however result in the creation of one new highway/rail at-grade crossing at University Street. The installation of this new highway/rail at-grade crossing exceeds the Board's threshold, an average daily traffic (ADT) of 5,000 vehicles, warranting highway/rail at-grade crossing delay analysis (see Appendix D). Also, the IL-DOT requested, in a letter dated September 16, 2003, that the impact resulting from the reactivation of the North Allen Road highway/rail at-grade crossing be evaluated. Allen Road currently has an ADT in excess of 14,000 and an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing installed with flashing-light signals and highway/rail grade crossing signs. For these reasons, a traffic delay analysis was conducted for this highway/rail at-grade crossing as well (see Appendix D).

2.4 SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

SEA has evaluated the environmental effects of the proposed PPHW rail construction and abandonment project for the following areas:

- Highway/rail at-grade crossings, including safety, delay and emergency response delay;
- Transportation systems, including highways and local roadways;
- Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Environmental Justice;
- Cumulative Effects;
- Freight Rail Operation Safety;
- Energy;
- Land Use;
- Social and Economic Effects;
- Soils;
- Water Resources; and
- Biological Resources.

2.5 AGENCY NOTIFICATION ACTIVITIES AND DRAFT EA COMMENT PROCESS

After full consideration of all agencies and comments received on this EA, SEA will conduct any additional analysis that is necessary, review all environmental information available to date, and consult further with appropriate public agencies. SEA will then prepare a Post EA, which will include its final recommendations to the Board regarding potential environmental

Table 2–1. Board’s Thresholds for Environmental Analysis

Environmental Impact Category	Activities Evaluated for Potential Environmental Effects	
	Rail Line Segments	Constructions
Safety		
Freight Rail Operations	Rail line segments with an average increase of eight or more freight trains per day. (PPHW will have approximately 2 to 3 trains per week.)	N/A ⁽¹⁾
Hazardous Materials Transport	Rail line segments with an increase in the annual volume of hazardous materials transported. (No hazardous materials transported.)	N/A
Passenger Operations	Rail line segments with existing passenger rail traffic and an average increase of one or more freight trains per day. (No passenger rail traffic.)	N/A
Highway/Rail At-grade Crossing Safety	All highway/rail at-grade crossings on rail line segments with an average increase of eight or more trains per day.	Highway/rail at-grade crossings created by proposed constructions, with an average increase of eight or more trains per day (PPHW will have approximately 2-3 trains per week)
Traffic and Transportation		
Highway/Rail At-grade Crossing Delay	Highway/rail at-grade crossings on segments that meet or exceed the Board’s thresholds or for environmental analysis, ⁽²⁾ and with average daily traffic (ADT) of 5,000 vehicles or greater, or crossings closer than 800 ft apart. (University Street currently exceeds ADT of 5,000 vehicles.)	Highway/rail at-grade crossings created by proposed constructions on rail line segments that meet or exceed the Board’s thresholds for environmental analysis and with ADT of 5,000 or more, or crossings closer than 800 ft (the proposed University Street crossing will not have another crossing within this threshold of 800 ft, however the ADT is greater than 5,000)
Passenger Rail Service Capacity	Rail line segments with existing passenger rail traffic and an increase of one or more freight trains per day. (No passenger rail traffic)	N/A
Roadway Capacity	N/A	N/A
Navigation	N/A	N/A

Table 2–1. Board’s Thresholds for Environmental Analysis (continued)

Activities Evaluated for Potential Environmental Effects		
Environmental Impact Category		
Traffic and Transportation (continued)		
Energy	System-wide evaluation of truck-to-rail diversions.	N/A
Air Quality		
Attainment or Maintenance Areas	Rail line segments with an increase of eight or more trains per day or at least a 100 percent increase in rail traffic (measured in annual gross ton-miles). (PPHW will have less than eight trains per day.)	All constructions (PPHW is within an attainment area)
Nonattainment Areas	Segments with an increase of three or more trains per day or at least a 50 percent increase in rail traffic (annual gross ton-miles). ⁽²⁾	All constructions. (PPHW is within an attainment area)
Noise	Rail line segments with an increase of eight trains per day or a 100 percent increase in annual gross ton-miles. (PPHW will have less than eight trains per day.)	All constructions
Cultural Resources	N/A	All constructions (No identified impacts)
Hazardous Waste Sites	N/A	All constructions (No identified impacts)
Land Use	N/A	All constructions (No identified impacts)
Natural Resources	N/A	All constructions (No identified impacts)
Environmental Justice	All activities exceeding Board thresholds for environmental analysis. (PPHW affects no minority or low income groups.)	All constructions (PPHW affects no minority or low income groups)

ADT = Average Daily Traffic

N/A = Not Applicable

Included in rail line segment analysis:

- 1) Air Quality Nonattainment Area: Increase of at least three trains per day, or as a 50 percent increase in annual gross ton-miles.
- 2) Air Quality Attainment or Maintenance Area: Increase of at least eight trains per day or a 100 percent increase in annual gross ton-miles.

impacts and recommended mitigation for the proposed rail line construction and operation. The Board will then consider the entire environmental record, including the EA, the Post EA, and all agency comments in making its final decision in this case regarding the proposed rail line construction and operation.

2.6 HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

SEA encourages the public to participate in the environmental review of PPHW's proposed activities by commenting on the EA during the 30-day comment period. Comments may be submitted to the address below. When submitting comments, please provide one original and two copies to:

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20423-0001

The following information should appear in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope:

Attention: Troy Brady
Finance Docket No. 34395

Date made available to the public: March 9, 2004
Comment due date: April 8, 2004

CHAPTER 3.0
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CHAPTER 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This chapter describes the alternatives considered – the proposed action and the no-action alternative, and the thresholds used in conducting the environmental analysis. An overview of the existing environment is set forth in Chapter 4.0. The environmental and social impacts of the proposed construction are addressed in Chapter 5.0.

3.1 RAIL CONSTRUCTION PROPOSED ACTION

The City of Peoria, IL, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western (PPHW), filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.36 to construct approximately 1,800 feet of track in Peoria, Peoria County, IL, over land that it owns or over which it has an easement for railroad purposes. The track to be constructed would connect a 1.9-mile segment of track that the City of Peoria (the City) purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) with an 8.29-mile segment of track known as the Keller Branch that the City acquired from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company (Rock Island). This construction, if approved, would allow for continued rail service to the existing two active shippers in Pioneer Park while the lone shipper located near the southeastern end of the Keller Branch would be served from the southeast by the same or a different rail operator. The completion of the rail connection would also allow PPHW to divert train traffic from downtown Peoria and its 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings.

3.1.1 No Action Alternative

In addition to the proposed action described above, SEA has considered a no action or no build alternative. The no action alternative would arise if PPHW were to be denied the right to construct the rail connection or if PPHW were to elect on its own not to go forward with its plans as described above. In this event, PPHW's property would remain essentially as it is at the present time. Existing traffic levels and routes would remain unchanged, including use of the 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings in downtown Peoria.

CHAPTER 4.0
OVERVIEW OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENT OF
PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION

CHAPTER 4.0

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENT OF PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the environment that may be affected by the construction and operation of the 1,800 ft of new connecting track.

Existing environment conditions are described so that the potential environmental impact of the proposed action may be assessed. It is the environmental conditions in the vicinity of the proposed construction area that are the primary focus of this chapter.

4.1 PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION LOCATION

PPHW's proposed project area is located in a light industrial park known as Pioneer Park on the northside of Peoria, Illinois. The City of Peoria (City) and the Village of Peoria Heights are located along the Illinois River approximately equidistant from Chicago, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri, at 166 miles (see Figure 1). The proposed project area is located approximately one-half mile north of Pioneer Parkway and will extend approximately 1,800 ft to the east of University Street (see Map 1A). The proposed construction project is located within an active light industrial area with no residential properties. The light industrial park known as Pioneer Park has undergone continued growth of both commercial and light industrial development since its inception.

4.2 LAND USE

Land use information is an important indicator of where people live and work. This information helps characterize the physical area and the relationship to the land and is beneficial to an understanding of how the proposed changes to land use associated with the construction and operation of the proposed action, described in the following chapter, might affect the area.

The proposed construction is located between Chanute Road to the north, Luthy Drive to the south and University Street to the west. The proposed rail construction will cross University Street and connect to an existing rail line, the Keller Branch, on the west side of University Street. This entire project is located within an area zoned as Industrial/Business Park District. Property immediately to the north of the proposed rail construction is owned by the local power company, AmerenCILCO. This property includes an office building, parking lot, materials storage yard, and garages for their fleet of maintenance vehicles and repair equipment. While to the south there are several industrial office buildings and materials storage yards, including Illinois American Water Co., Hoerr Construction, Inc. and J.C. Dillion Plumbing.

4.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SETTING

The economic setting and demographics of PPHW's project area provide indicators of the local and regional economic strength, population trends, and population characteristics. This information helps define the economic setting of the Proposed Action and is beneficial to an

understanding of how the proposed construction and operation of the new connecting track would affect the local economy.

The City is located about midway between Chicago, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. Combining “big city assets” with a “smaller town lifestyle” the community has emerged as an attractive location along the Illinois River. According to the 2000 Census data, the City has a population of 112,936. The City is racially diverse with 69.3 percent white, 24.8 percent black, and 5.9 percent other races.

The City’s largest business sectors are Manufacturing, Healthcare Facilities/Medical, and Education. The largest employers include Caterpillar, Inc., Keystone Steel and Wire Co., and Komatsu Mining Systems in the Manufacturing sector and OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Methodist Medical Center, and Proctor Community Hospital in the Medical Sector. In the Education Sector, Bradley University, Illinois Central College, and Peoria School District 150 are the largest employers.

The Village of Peoria Heights (Village) was incorporated in 1898 and has a population of 6,635. Unlike the racial diversity of the City, the Village is predominantly white (92.9 percent). The Village has a long history of support to the business community and currently is the home to over 300 local, regional and national taxpaying industrial, commercial and retail businesses as well as many non-profit corporations. Table 4-1 exhibits a pattern of population and income trends within Peoria County, the City of Peoria, and the Village of Peoria Heights.

The Village’s largest business sectors include Retail, Education, and Insurance. The largest employer in the Village is Pearl Insurance. In the Education Sector, the Peoria Heights Community Unit School District 325 is also a large employer.

4.4 GEOLOGY AND CLIMATE

The geology and climate, or physiography, of a region provides a basis for understanding the Proposed Action against the natural conditions of land and weather. The geology and soils of the region are described using historic climatic data.

4.4.1 Geology

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey, Peoria County was repeatedly covered by glacial ice during the Pliocene Age. Most of the present surface materials and land forms are the result of the two most recent glacial stages, the Illinoian and the Wisconsin.

Table 4–1. Population and Income Trends for Peoria County, Peoria, and Peoria Heights

	Peoria County	City of Peoria	Village of Peoria Heights
Year 2000 Population	183,433	112,936	6,635
Year 2000 Racial Percentages	80.8% White, 17.1% Black, 2.1% Other	69.3% White, 24.8% Black, 5.9% Other	92.9% White, 3.5 % Black, 3.6% Other
Year 1990 Population	182,827	113,513	6,930
Year 1990 Racial Percentages	84.4% White, 13.6% Black, 2.0% Other	76.6% White, 20.9% Black, 2.5% Other	94.6% White, 3.9% Black, 1.5% Other
Percent Population Change from 1990-2000	+0.3%	-0.5%	-4.3%
Year 1980 Population	200,466	124,160	7,453
Percent Population Change from 1980-1990	-8.8%	-8.6%	-7.0%
2000 Median Household Income	\$39,978	\$36,397	\$32,161
1990 Median Household Income	\$28,193	\$26,074	\$24,015
Year 2000 Population Blow Poverty Level	13.7%	18.8%	8.8%
Percent Income Change from 1990-2000	+41.8%	+39.6%	+33.9%

The Illinoian glacier covered the entire county, while the more recent Wisconsin glacier covered only the northeastern part. During its advance, each glacier modified the previously existing landscape and, in retreat, left a deposit of glacial drift. In upland areas, glacial drift has been subsequently covered by windblown silt, known as loess. Moraines occur as gently undulating ridges in the portion of Peoria County once covered by the Wisconsin glacier. They are separated by wide, nearly level till plains or outwash plains. Moraines are not apparent on the Illinoian till plain. Major areas of bottom land exist along Kickapoo Creek and the Illinois River. Terraces of glacial outwash are present along the Illinois River. They are in areas reworked by the wind into dune-shaped land forms.

The majority of the proposed construction project area east of University Street is depicted by the NCRS Peoria County Soil Survey as being Orthents-Urban land complex and the remainder being Sable silty loam. Orthents-Urban land complex consists of moderately well drained or somewhat poorly drained soils intermingled with Urban land. The soils have been cut, leveled, or filled during construction of roadways or urban structures. In most areas they are nearly level or gently sloping.

Typically, the surface layer of the Orthents is loam or silt loam. The underlying material consists of layers of sandy loam, clay loam, loam, or silty clay loam. The soil material commonly is more than 5 feet thick. The Urban land is typically covered by streets, parking lots, buildings, and other structures.

Sable silty clay loams are nearly level, poorly drained soils found in flats and depressions and shallow drainageways in the uplands. These soils occasionally pond water for brief periods in the spring.

Typically, the surface layer is black, friable, silty clay loam about eight inches thick. The subsurface layer is black and very dark gray, firm silty clay loam about 14 inches thick and is mottled in its lower part. In most areas, Sable soils are cultivated. It is well suited to cultivated crops, pasture, and hay. It generally is unsuitable as a site for dwellings and septic tank absorption fields because of the ponding.

4.4.2 Climate

Peoria County is located in north central Illinois and subjected to a temperate climate. The average annual temperature is about 50.5°F and range from an average low temperature of 21.5°F to an average high temperature of 75.0°F. The lowest temperature recorded in Peoria was -25°F, which occurred in 1977. The highest recorded temperature in Peoria was 102°F in 1966.

The total annual precipitation is about 34.9 inches. About 22.6 inches, or 65 percent, usually falls from April through September. The heaviest 1-day rainfall recorded was 4.43 inches, occurring in Peoria on June 2, 1980. The greatest snowfall event recorded was about 20 inches. The average snowfall for Peoria County is about 26.3 inches.

4.5 WATER RESOURCES

The project area is located at the juncture of the Middle Illinois River Watershed, which surrounds the Illinois River from Peoria County to Schuyler County, and the Upper Illinois/Mazon River Watershed, that watershed portion of the Illinois River from LaSalle County to Peoria County. Surface waters within the project area include the Illinois River, Kickapoo Creek, and Big Hollow Creek. Surface water in the project area enters Peoria's storm sewer system via street drains or eventually flows into Big Hollow Creek which flows into Kickapoo Creek, and eventually flows into the Illinois River.

The stream segment of the Illinois River where Kickapoo Creek empties is classified according to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (IL-EPA) 2002 Illinois Water Quality Report as fully supporting overall use and aquatic life, and not supporting fish consumption use and primary contact use (recreational usage). Causes for use impairment include polychlorinated biphenols, mercury, and pathogens. The source of these causes is unknown. The Illinois River is listed on the IL-EPA's 303(d) list of impaired waters.

Kickapoo Creek is a permanent stream approximately 19 miles in length and dissects Peoria County generally in an easterly direction until it empties into the Illinois River south of Peoria. The IL-EPA classifies Kickapoo Creek as fully supporting overall use and aquatic life, and partially supporting primary contact use. Causes and sources of impairment have not been determined. Kickapoo Creek is listed on the IL-EPA's 303(d) list of impaired waters. According to the Biological Stream Characterization (BSC) (IL-EPA, 1996), Kickapoo Creek is a highly valued aquatic resource (Class B) stream in Illinois.

The Big Hollow Creek is a permanent stream approximately 6.7 mi. in length originating north of Peoria and runs southwest to empty into Kickapoo Creek. The IL-EPA has not assessed Big Hollow Creek for use impairment. Big Hollow Creek is not listed on the 303(d) list of impaired waters.

No streams or wetlands were identified by the resource agencies or during a field survey within the area proposed or construction by PPHW.

4.5.1 Surface Water and Wetlands

All surface waters will enter the City's storm sewer system via street drains or eventually flow into Big Hollow Creek which flows into Kickapoo Creek, and eventually flows into the Illinois River. However, no streams or wetlands have been identified by the resource agencies or during a field survey and therefore no jurisdictional wetlands were identified.

4.5.2 Groundwater

Jurisdictional waters, or "waters of the U.S.," are defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as "coastal and inland waters, lakes, rivers, and streams that are navigable waters of

the United States, including their adjacent wetlands” and “tributaries to navigable waters of the United States, including adjacent wetlands.” (Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual [Environmental Laboratory, 1987]).

The City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights both obtain their water supply from the Illinois River. No wellhead protection zones have been identified within the proposed project area.

Additionally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate maps (FIRM) indicate that the proposed construction area is located in Zone C which is outside of the 100-year floodplain.

4.6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

4.6.1 Wildlife

SEA reviewed information and data related to the biological resources of the proposed project area. Information about the existing environment are found in this section. Biological resources include fauna and flora of the area and the habitats in which they occur.

Wildlife within the proposed rail construction area is very limited due to lack of available habitat within the commercial and light industrial area where the proposed project will be located (see Photographic Log in Appendix B). Wildlife species present in the construction area may consist of small mammals such as rabbits, mice, voles, moles, and shrews. A few bird species that utilize urban environments may also be present such as house sparrows, robins, cardinals and starlings. It is not expected that sufficient habitat is present to support many, if any, species of reptiles or amphibians.

4.6.2 Vegetation

Vegetation within the proposed rail construction area consists primarily of non-native species of grasses and forbs (see Photographic Log in Appendix B). Most of the project area has been previously developed for parking lots, businesses and roadways.

4.7 TRANSPORTATION

4.7.1 Approach and Methodology

Information regarding traffic volumes and grade crossings is based on field observations, traffic count studies, and existing project plans. The proposed rail line construction would intersect with University Street. A traffic study was conducted to obtain traffic data using the Highway Capacity Software (HCS) 2000, which is based on Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) 2000 methodology. Vehicle counts were taken in December 2003.

4.7.2 Existing Vehicular Traffic

The proposed rail line would cross University Street. University Street has an average daily traffic (ADT) of approximately 8,000. This number is well above the ADT volume of 5,000 that

SEA considers to be a minimum threshold for assessing highway/rail at-grade crossings where vehicular delay due to an increase in train traffic could potentially be significant.

This corridor was selected for PPHW's proposed project because of its existing rail infrastructure, connections with nearby Class I railroads, and the potential for future development in the City's Industrial/Business Park District. Because the proposed construction and planned abandonment are linked, pedestrian and vehicular safety will be enhanced by the closure of 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings.

4.7.3 Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossings

The proposed new rail line would require the construction of one new highway/rail at-grade crossing at University Street and the reactivation of an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing at Allen Road.

4.8 AIR QUALITY

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) rules require consideration of air quality impacts as part of the environmental documentation. These rules establish thresholds that are used to indicate potential project impacts. The air quality thresholds established by the Board are based on an increase of 8 trains per day and a 100 percent increase in gross ton miles. The proposed construction would not exceed the Board's air quality thresholds. SEA however, considered air quality resources as part of the environmental analysis. This section provides baseline air quality conditions for the project area.

SEA identified air quality conditions in Peoria County. SEA reviewed existing air quality data and coordinated with local and State regulatory agencies to identify air quality concerns in the region.

The Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1970 and CAA Amendments of 1977 and 1990 regulate air emissions from area, stationary, and mobile sources. The CAA authorized the EPA to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to protect public health and welfare. In addition to setting maximum pollutant standards, the CAA directs states to develop air quality plans called State Implementation Plans (SIP).

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, set maximum allowable concentration limits for six criteria air pollutants. Areas in which air pollution levels persistently exceed the NAAQS may be designated as "non-attainment." States in which a non-attainment area is located must develop and implement a State Implementation Plan (SIP) containing policies and regulations that will bring about attainment of the NAAQS.

According to the EPA, all of Peoria County is an attainment area for each NAAQS pollutant. Peoria County is not therefore, within a designated Air Quality Control Region for any air pollutant. This means that air quality within the proposed project area is considered better than the national standards established by EPA.

4.9 NOISE

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) rules require the consideration of noise impacts as part of the environmental documentation. These rules establish thresholds that are used to indicate potential project impacts. The noise thresholds established by the Board are based on an increase of 8 trains per day and a 100 percent increase in gross ton miles.

The existing environment for the proposed construction is located in an area that currently abuts several industrial businesses' and also by University Street which has an average daily traffic of 8,000. There are no known sensitive receptors within one-half mile of the proposed construction area.

4.10 CULTURAL RESOURCES

SEA conducted a thorough investigation of the archaeological and historic resources within the proposed project area. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4.2 and Chapter 4.4, the entire site has been previously disturbed and covered with several feet of fill material. Additionally, the area has been heavily industrialized and developed for many years. Therefore, it is unlikely that any significant cultural resources exist within the proposed project area.

4.11 RECREATIONAL AND VISUAL RESOURCES

SEA and PPHW identified recreational resources in the project area. These resources represent important investments by the people and communities of the region. The inventory of recreation resources is needed to determine the effect, if any, the proposed rail line would have on recreation accessibility, uses, and growth.

SEA conducted a site visit of the project area and found that there are no recreational or visual resources within or affected by the proposed rail construction. The proposed rail construction project will primarily impact the back or side property of the adjacent industrial properties, which contain parking lots or outside materials storage yards. The west end of the AmerenCILCO property has been previously landscaped with prairie grasses. The majority of this landscaped prairie grass is outside the limits of the proposed construction; however, the portion within the proposed right-of-way will be disturbed during construction, if approved.

4.12 ENERGY

An understanding of the energy resources related to the Proposed Action assists SEA in assessing the potential impacts to energy efficiencies. Existing energy use in PPHW's proposed rail construction and operation are discussed in this section.

4.12.1 Approach and Methodology

SEA evaluated the potential changes in transport to determine their effect on potential energy use.

4.12.2 Energy Information

PPHW currently provides rail service to three shippers on its rail line averaging 2 or 3 trains per week with 3 or 4 cars per train.

4.13 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

SEA prepares environmental documents following the guidance presented in Executive Order 12898 - “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” This Executive Order directs federal agencies to analyze the environmental effects of their actions on minority and low-income communities. This section identifies potential environmental justice populations in the project area.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines Environmental Justice as the “fair treatment for people of all races, cultures, and incomes, regarding the development of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Federal agencies are responsible for identifying and addressing the significant and adverse effects that have a high and disproportionate impact on minority and low-income communities. Agencies must ensure their actions:

- Do not discriminate based on race, color, or origin.
- Identify and avoid discrimination and avoid disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority populations and low income populations.
- Provide opportunities for input from the community.

The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) established procedures for complying with Executive Order 12898 in the February 3, 1997, DOT Order “Department of Transportation Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” Although the Surface Transportation Board (STB) is an independent regulatory agency housed in DOT, it is not bound by DOT Orders. However, the STB considers environmental justice to be in the public interest and utilizes Executive Order 12898, the DOT Order, CEQ regulations, and guidance issued by EPA in examining environmental justice issues related to its actions.

The CEQ guidance explains that a minority or low-income population may be present if the minority or low-income population percentage of the affected area is “meaningfully greater” than the minority or low-income population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis. SEA uses the term “meaningfully greater” to be greater than 50 percent of more than 10 percent above the average. Since the Proposed Action lies entirely within Peoria County, the appropriate geographical unit for an analysis of the potential for environmental justice impacts associated with PPHW’s new rail line is Peoria County. Therefore, in order to determine whether PPHW’s new rail line would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on a minority or low-income population, data was first gathered comparing the populations in communities adjacent to the project area with the population of Peoria County as a whole.

Information regarding minority and low-income populations was obtained from the United States Census Bureau and compared with the criteria for establishing environmental justice communities contained in the federal law and policies described below.

According to the 2000 Census data and summarized in Table 4.1, the minority population of Peoria County was 19.2 percent while the low-income population was 13.7 percent. The minority population in the Village of Peoria Heights, where the proposed construction will occur, is 7.1 percent. The Village of Peoria Heights has a population below the poverty level of 8.8 percent, which is considerably lower than the poverty level population of Peoria County at 13.7 percent. These data demonstrate that the populations of the communities potentially affected by the Proposed Action contain substantially fewer minorities or populations below the poverty level than Peoria County as a whole.

CHAPTER 5.0
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF
PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION

CHAPTER 5.0

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED RAIL CONSTRUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the potential environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of PPHW's proposed rail line. This chapter discusses the following environmental impact areas: land use; social and economic effects; physiography and soils; water resources; biological resources; transportation systems – local roadways, highway/rail at-grade crossings, safety, traffic delay, and emergency response delay; energy; navigation; air quality; noise; cultural resources; recreational and visual resources; environmental justice, and cumulative effects.

5.1 LAND USE

The potential for local land use impacts from the construction and operation of a rail line generally arise from the acquisition of land for right-of-way and associated uses, as well as the effects on property adjacent to the new right-of-way. Additional impacts could arise if the proposed project were to change the area's current development trends or alter land use policies.

This project is consistent with existing land use and zoning. The project should not result in adverse impacts to rare or unique natural features. The property on which PPHW's proposed project would be located has historically been zoned for industrial and business use.

The property acquired by PPHW for this proposed rail connection would be cleared as required to permit construction and conversion to an operating railroad corridor. The right-of-way is bounded on each side by businesses and as stated above, is zoned for industrial and business use and is consistent with the City of Peoria's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

In a letter dated October 11, 2003, the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IL-IDA) states that since the Proposed Action is located within the boundaries of the City of Peoria and agricultural lands will not be affected, the railroad improvements are exempt from further review.

5.1.1 Coastal Zone

The Proposed Action is not located in a Coastal Zone Management Area.

5.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS

5.2.1 Evaluation Criteria

SEA analyzed the socioeconomic effects of the proposed rail line construction and operation on the project area. SEA considered impacts to be adverse if construction or operation of the proposed rail line would result in significant alteration to economic growth or non-compliance with adopted growth plans; cause displacement of a significant number of local

residents; disrupt or sever community interactions and public services; or create negative effects to the local or regional economy.

5.2.2 Socioeconomic Impacts

Potential socioeconomic impacts related to the construction and operation of the proposed rail line are expected to be minimal. The proposed PPHW rail line would likely result in the hiring of new employees and indirectly result in the creation of other jobs in the future. Service will continue to those active shippers currently receiving rail service. SEA does not expect rail traffic to increase beyond the current two to three trains per week.

No residential or commercial displacement would be caused by the Proposed Action. However, while SEA finds that minor, but insignificant, impacts may result from the installation of a highway/rail at-grade crossing at University Street. However, the planned abandonment, if approved, would result in the elimination of 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings that will provide safer streets for motorists and pedestrians.

No significant adverse impacts on economic development are expected to occur because of construction and operation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is expected to, over time, result in an increase to local economic development.

Additionally, the proposed rail line would not interrupt or displace public services. The Proposed Action would also have no impact on recreational activities or uses in the project area.

5.3 PHYSIOGRAPHY AND SOILS

SEA examined the potential for the Proposed Action to modify the geology and land forms of PPHW's project area. SEA notes that nearly all of the land within the proposed construction project area has been previously disturbed. Therefore, SEA believes that the Proposed Action will not result in any adverse environmental impacts to the natural landscape or the native soils.

5.4 WATER RESOURCES

The State of Illinois, pursuant to Section 404(e) of the Clean Water Act, is authorized to issue general permits on a statewide basis for the discharge of dredged or fill materials and/or the placement of structures that are components of a single and complete project (including all temporary and permanent features) that individually or cumulatively result in direct or indirect impacts to 1.0 acre or less of waters of the U.S. (including jurisdictional wetlands). Indirect impacts include impacts to waters of the U.S. or jurisdictional wetlands that are indirectly affected by flooding, excavation, or drainage, as a result of the project.

5.4.1 Surface Water and Wetlands

No adverse environmental impacts to surface water or any wetlands are anticipated. Stormwater runoff issues will be permitted under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) administered by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IL-EPA). The

proposed project is consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local water quality standards. In a letter dated September 18, 2003, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stated that based on its review of the Proposed Action that Section 404 permit would not be required.

In a letter dated October 20, 2003, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IL-EPA) stated that the IL-EPA had no objections to the proposed construction project. However, the IL-EPA stated that PPHW would be required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) from the IL-EPA, Division of Water Pollution Control.

5.4.2 Groundwater

Recharge to aquifers is not expected to be impeded because of the small amount of impervious surface associated with rail tracks and the utilization of proper run-off design. No aquifers would be disturbed in the areas of excavation for the proposed rail line.

Groundwater quality could potentially be affected if a spill or contaminant release occurred during rail line construction or operation and penetrated the aquifer. The likelihood of such a release, however, is extremely small due to proper containerization and handling and to the small quantities of fuels and oils that would be present during construction and operation. Should a release occur, PPHW's emergency response and spill protection plans would be implemented as required by state and Federal regulations.

5.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

SEA assessed the biological resources in the area of PPHW's proposed rail connection and the potential for the proposed project to affect local species or to otherwise modify their habitats. Biological resources include wildlife, vegetation, and species of concern.

In a letter dated October 2, 2003, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission concluded that the proposed rail connection will not pose a threat to State Nature Preserves or Illinois Land and Water Reserves. In addition, the Commission found that no threatened or endangered species are located within the proposed project area.

5.5.1 Wildlife

Effects to terrestrial wildlife from construction and operation of the proposed rail line will primarily be related to conversion of land within the right-of-way from its current habitat uses. However, since the project area is located in an urban setting, wildlife habitat is limited. Wildlife occupying adjacent habitat could also be subject to sporadic disturbance because of noise generating construction activities, subsequent train operations, and pedestrian traffic. Pedestrian and construction-related disturbances would be temporary, and not anticipated to cause major redistribution of resident species.

In a letter dated September 10, 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stated that the proposed project is within the range of the Federally threatened Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

SEA believes that implementation of the proposed construction and operation of the rail line may temporarily displace a few limited species of wildlife because of increased noise from construction equipment and the presence of humans. However, such disturbances would be temporary and is not expected to cause notable impacts to wildlife from either harm to, or loss of, individuals or populations.

5.5.2 Vegetation

SEA anticipates that vegetation loss from the Proposed Action would be limited to areas within the immediate construction area. Impacts to these plant communities would be minor and would not have a significant effect on the availability of habitat types within the project area. High quality habitat along the proposed route was not identified.

In a letter dated September 10, 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stated that the proposed project is within the range of the Federally threatened Decurrent false aster (*Boltonia decurrens*), the Prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) and the Eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*).

However, due to the urban setting and lack of diversity of flora and fauna along PPHW's proposed route, SEA believes that the proposed project would not result in any adverse impacts to biological resources, including critical habitat for endangered or threatened species, wildlife refuges, parks, or forests.

5.6 TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

This section describes the transportation and safety elements of the Proposed Action, for construction and operation activities.

SEA used the following criteria to determine impacts of the Proposed Action on the highway and road network in PPHW's project area.

- Need for new highway/rail at-grade crossings.
- Safety conditions at highway/rail at-grade crossings.
- Construction impacts to area roads.
- Expected traffic delay.
- Risk of occurrence of train accidents, derailments, and other incidents.

5.6.1 Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossings

PPHW's proposed rail connection would not introduce a new transportation mode to the project area. The rail connection would intersect with University Street resulting in the construction of a new highway/rail at-grade crossing. PPHW proposes to continue the same level of service to its existing three shippers which is limited to one or two trains per week each with one or two cars per train. In addition, the existing traffic conditions in the vicinity of the proposed railroad extension and its impact on North Allen Road located west of University Street were reviewed for the construction year (2004).

In its letter dated September 16, 2003, the IL-DOT stated that the impact resulting from number trains crossing Allen Road should be evaluated. Allen Road currently has an ADT in excess of 14,000 and an existing highway/rail at-grade crossing installed with flashing-light signals and highway-rail grade crossing signs, commonly identified as the crossbuck sign. This highway/rail at-grade crossing, currently in-active, will be active if the proposed construction is approved.

Although the Illinois Commerce Commission (IL-ICC) was included as part of our agency correspondence, letter dated September 5, 2003, we have not received a response. However, in response to an earlier review of the Proposed Action, letter dated December 7, 2001, the IL-ICC granted PPHW the authority to establish a new highway/rail at-grade crossing at University Street provided the following measures are instituted:

- Installation of automatic flashing light signals and gates, fencing on both sides of the right-of-way along the parking lots, and concrete crossing surface.
- All trains shall sound their horn before crossing University Street.
- Compliance with several reporting requirements.

SEA believes that if the grade crossing safety mitigation identified by the IL-ICC is implemented that the Proposed Action would not have any significant impacts on transportation or safety resulting from unsafe conditions at railroad grade crossings or unreasonable traffic delays.

5.6.2 Construction Impacts

No construction is planned for the existing North Allen Road highway/rail at-grade crossing. However, the University Street highway/rail at-grade crossing construction, lane use restrictions or road closure would occur only for short periods of time, over several non-consecutive days, while track is installed and adjustment or tie-ins are made to the existing roadway profile. Detour routes would be made available as necessary. PPHW would station equipment so that any total closures would be minimized, allowing the disturbed area to be quickly restored for passage by emergency vehicles. The extent of lane restrictions or road closures would be similar to that encountered by the public during routine highway maintenance or resurfacing projects.

Permission for and scheduling of lane restriction or road closures, as well as detour approvals, would be obtained in coordination with the appropriate public transportation agency. PPHW would consider maintenance of emergency response capabilities and school bus schedules in planning and executing the necessary road work. PPHW or its designated contractor would be responsible for the cost of all permits, detours, coordination with local officials, and agencies, and public notifications related to temporary lane restrictions or road closures.

5.6.3 Impact on Vehicular Traffic

PPHW projects that approximately one or two trains per week with one or two cars per train, moving at approximately 6 miles per hour, would operate over the University Street and North Allen Road at-grade crossing. The light volume of train traffic expected to cross the University Street or

the North Allen Road highway/rail at-grade crossings would consist of through traffic, with the potential for blockage limited to the unusual instance of a mechanical or other emergency situation.

University Street experiences moderate vehicular traffic, with an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count of approximately 8,000 vehicles determined during a December 2003 traffic count. North Allen Road 2001 ADT counts from IL-DOT were projected to 2003 ADT counts using the University Street traffic projection rates. IL-DOT 2001 ADT counts on North Allen Road show 13,900 and 14,300 ADT to the north and south of the grade crossing, respectively. This was adjusted to 16,063 and 17,383 to represent 2003 ADT counts. This count constitutes a fairly heavy growth rate and should be considered very conservative. SEA considers an ADT of 5,000 vehicles to represent a minimum traffic volume with the potential for significant vehicular delay.

5.6.4 Level of Service at Highway/Rail At-grade Crossings

No specific measure of efficiency is currently prescribed for calculating vehicle delay for at-grade railroad crossings. SEA utilized Level of Service (LOS) criteria for signalized intersections due to the similarities between signalized intersections and at-grade railroad crossings. SEA utilized Level of Service (LOS) criteria for signalized intersections due to the similarities between signalized intersections and at-grade railroad crossings.

5.6.5 Intersection Capacity Analysis

The intersection's capacity was evaluated by using The Highway Capacity Software (HCS) 2000, which is based on Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) 2000 methodology. Capacity analyses indicate how well an intersection is operating by applying a grading system called level-of-service that defines the quality of traffic operations on a street system.

Levels-of-service (LOS) can range from Level A for the best traffic operation to Level F for the poorest traffic operation. As illustrated in Table 5-1, LOS is directly related to the control delay for signalized intersections. The LOS at the proposed highway/rail at-grade crossing for the construction year (2004) traffic on University Street and North Allen Road was determined in order to estimate the impact of proposed at-grade crossing on traffic operations.

Table 5-1. Level of Service (LOS) Criteria for Signalized Intersection

LOS	Control Delay (sec/vehicle)
A	<=10
B	>10-20
C	>20-35
D	>35-55
E	>55-80
F	>80

Based on existing operations on the existing railroad spur (the Keller Branch), the average train speed was assumed to be 6 mph at the proposed highway/rail at-grade crossing. For the purpose of calculation, excluding the weekends, it was assumed that two trains per day (one inbound and one outbound) will use the proposed tracks. The average train length was assumed to be a maximum of 400 ft (four car trains with engine).²

5.6.6 Level of Service (LOS)

LOS is directly related to the calculated average delay for all vehicles. Table 5-2 presents the results of the analysis of LOS at the existing North Allen Road highway/rail at-grade crossing, based on calculations for crossing delays and vehicle delay counts. As seen in Table 5-2, both the before and after analysis, with one train trip and two train trips per day, respectively, indicate that proposed rail extension would not result in adverse transportation impacts to LOS on North Allen Road. Therefore, no mitigation is warranted based on LOS.

Similarly, the proposed University Street highway/rail at-grade crossing results, which are illustrated in Table 5-3, indicate that the proposed highway/rail at-grade crossing would not result in adverse transportation impacts to LOS on University Street. Therefore, no mitigation is warranted based on LOS.

²For the purpose of this calculation, which is calculated on a daily basis, SEA has to assume a worst case scenario or 1 or 2 trains per day instead of 1 or 2 trains per week that has been identified by PPHW. The use of the actual train traffic would have resulted in a fraction of a train per day which is not feasible.

Table 5-2: Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossing Vehicle Delay and Queues - North Allen Road

Location	No. of Lanes	ADT	Avg. Train Speed (mph)	Trains per Day ¹	Avg. Train Length (feet) ²	Blocked Crossing Time per Train (min)	Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle (min)	Max Vehicle Queue	No. of Vehicles Delayed per Day	Average Delay for all Vehicles (sec)	Level of Service
North Allen Road Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	1	17,383	6	2	400	1.26	1.85	20	15	0.20	A
North Allen Road Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	1	16,063	6	2	400	1.26	1.40	18	14	0.15	A
North Allen Road Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	2	17,383	6	2	400	1.26	1.85	20	30	0.39	A
North Allen Road Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	2	16,063	6	2	400	1.26	1.40	18	28	0.29	A

¹: Includes all events requiring gate closings: train crossings, moving trains, maintenance work, etc.

²: Average train length: 2 trains per day at 400 ft each

Table 5-3: Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossing Vehicle Delay and Queues - University Street

Location	No. of Lanes	ADT	Avg. Train Speed (mph)	Trains per Day ¹	Avg. Train Length (feet) ²	Blocked Crossing Time per Train (min)	Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle (min)	Max Vehicle Queue	No. of Vehicles Delayed per Day	Average Delay for all Vehicles (sec)	Level of Service
Univ. St Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	4	8,266	6	2	400	1.26	0.75	5	15	0.16	A
Univ. St Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	2	7,858	6	2	400	1.26	0.86	9	14	0.18	A

¹: Includes all events requiring gate closings: train crossings, moving trains, maintenance work, etc.

²: Average train length: 2 trains per day at 400 ft each

5.6.7 Grade Railroad Crossing Safety

Safety concerns increase when LOS deteriorates to LOS E and LOS F. At LOS E and LOS F, drivers become frustrated and lose patience. Drivers may make rash decisions due to impatience. Judgment becomes extremely impaired when driving while fatigued. Drivers may negotiate around activated (or gates in the down position) to beat an on-coming train.

The LOS at both the existing North Allen Road crossing and at the proposed University Street crossing is expected to operate at an acceptable LOS A. As such, excessive delay is not likely to encourage reckless behavior from motorists on either roadway. However, some recommendations for improvements at both locations have been made to address safety concerns. They are discussed below.

5.6.8 Conclusions

Based on the results of SEA's traffic delay analysis and the opinion of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IL-DOT), letter dated September 16, 2003, SEA believes that if the mitigation measures outlined below as well as those identified by the IL-ICC, Section 5.6.1, that no significant adverse impacts will result from the Proposed Action.

Based on traffic delay analysis, PPHW proposes the following voluntary mitigation regarding the proposed highway/rail at-grade crossings:

- The Highway-Rail Grade Crossing sign, commonly identified as the Crossbuck sign, should be installed on each University Street approach. The details of the signs can be found in part 8 of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Millennium Edition.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (100 ft) sign should be installed on the southwest drive to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing on University Street soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the proposed University Street at-grade crossing and the northeast and northwest driveways (50 ft and 30 ft, respectively) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (9 vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on each driveway.
- Essentially no storage exists between the tracks and the northwest driveway on University Street. Consideration for closure of this drive should be given. As the traffic volume on University Street grows, relocating the northeast driveway to the north to have a minimum of 200 ft distance from the centerline of the proposed railroad crossing should be considered.
- Based on the low amount of train traffic at this location, combined with the low operating speed of the train, and low projected rail volume, the MUTCD does not

warrant any active traffic control device at the proposed University Street crossing. However, if there is no illumination at the grade during the night hours, installing an active control device such as Flashing-Light signals could be considered.

- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (65 ft) sign should be installed on the closest northeast drive on North Allen Road to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway/rail at-grade crossing soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the North Allen Road grade crossing and the closest northeast drive (65 ft) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (18 vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on the driveway.

Refer to Appendix D for the traffic delay analysis.

5.7 ENERGY

Consistent with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) regulations, SEA evaluated the potential for the proposed project to affect the movement of energy resources and recyclable commodities. The Proposed Action would not affect the movement of any energy resources or recyclable commodities in Illinois.

Because PPHW will maintain rail service to its existing three shippers, there will be no net change in movement of energy resources and recyclable commodities. PPHW's proposed construction and operation would have a positive effect on overall energy by increasing shipping efficiencies. Additionally, SEA believes that if the planned rail abandonment is approved, traffic delays and shipping efficiencies would be further enhanced by the removal of the 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings and the subsequent reduction in traffic delays.

5.8 NAVIGATION

The addition of ships and barges as an additional mode of transportation is not being considered for this project because of the low volume of shipping proposed. Therefore, SEA did not conduct an analysis of potential adverse impacts.

5.9 AIR QUALITY

SEA did not conduct an analysis of air quality because the proposed rail connection would only experience one or two trains per week. This volume of projected rail traffic is below the Board's threshold for air quality analysis of at least eight trains per day in an attainment area (49 CFR 1105.7(e)(5)(ii)).

In addition, SEA believes that air emissions related to temporary construction activities is unlikely to result in significant adverse effects on air quality due to their temporary, local, and controlled nature. Lastly, SEA notes that the project area is also within an attainment area.

5.10 NOISE

SEA did not conduct an analysis of noise because the Proposed Action would only experience one or two trains per week which is below the Board's threshold of analysis for noise of eight trains per day under the Board's environmental regulations at 49 CFR 1105.7(e)(6). The location of the new highway/rail at-grade crossing of University Street is located in an industrial area and no noise sensitive receptors are located in proximity to the proposed highway/rail at-grade crossing (see the Environmental Resources Maps, Figure 2). Therefore, noise impacts are not anticipated, and a noise analysis was not conducted.

5.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes the potential impacts to cultural resources. PPHW has consulted with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IL-HPA). In a letter dated October 17, 2003, the IL-HPA stated that it had no objections to the Proposed Action and that no historic properties would be affected (see Agency Correspondence in Appendix C).

5.12 RECREATIONAL AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section assesses the impacts on recreational resources in PPHW's project area.

Construction and operation of the proposed rail line would not create a loss of or adversely affect any recreational area. Similarly, construction and operation of the proposed rail line would not affect game species of birds, mammals, or fish. SEA concluded that the proposed rail line would not have an adverse impact on recreation due to the loss or impairment of public recreational areas or harm to game species or other natural resources used for recreation.

SEA notes that in a letter dated October 23, 2003, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (Commission) states that it fully supports this undertaking. The Commission goes on to state that the planned abandonment of 7.5 miles of the Keller Branch would complete an integral link in the Rock Island State Trail and would also compliment the Mossville Bluffs Watershed Management Plan completed in 2001.

In addition, in a letter dated September 23, 2003, the Pleasure Driveway and Park District of Peoria, Illinois stated their support for the proposed rail connection project and future rail abandonment, if approved.

Lastly, if the proposed construction is approved, PPHW has future plans to seek authority from the Board to abandon 6.7 miles of the Keller Branch. If this occurs, as planned, recreation in the area will be greatly enhanced through the creation of a rail trail and the removal of 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings.

5.13 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

SEA analyzed the effect of the proposed rail line on low income and minority populations in accordance with procedures outlined in Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” SEA conducted an environmental justice analysis to (1) determine the presence or absence of environmental justice communities of concern in proximity to the proposed project, and (2) if such a community is present, determine the presence or absence of disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on the citizens of that community.

In the context of PPHW’s proposed rail construction project, it was determined that the Executive Order, Federal agency guidance, and the public interest warrant addressing:

1. Whether the proposed PPHW project could have disproportionate high and adverse impacts on minority or low income populations;
2. If so, whether reasonable and feasible measures could eliminate or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse impacts; and
3. Whether it is appropriate to modify recommended mitigation measures to meet the needs of a disproportionately affected minority or low-income populations.

The Proposed Action is located within an industrial park; however, there is a residential mobile home park located to the east of the project area, adjacent to the southern portion of the Mt. Hawley Airport property, about one-quarter of a mile from the project area. To date, no minority or low-income groups have spoken negatively against the project.

As described in Chapter 4, SEA’s review of the demographic characteristics of Peoria County did not identify any populations in PPHW’s project area that would meet the criteria for low income or minority populations. Based on this review of the demographics of communities within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Action, construction and operation of PPHW’s rail connection would have neither a disproportionately high nor adverse environmental impact on minority or low income communities. Therefore, no environmental justice impacts would occur if the Board approved of the application to construct and operate PPHW’s rail connection. No further assessment of potential environmental justice impacts is required for the proposed project.

5.14 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing the NEPA define cumulative impact as “the impact on the environment, which results from the incremental consequences of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” (40 CFR 1508.7). This ensures that the range of actions that are considered in the NEPA document includes not only the project proposed, but also all actions that could contribute to cumulative impacts.

Using CEQ guidelines, SEA evaluated the cumulative impact from the proposed rail connection. SEA consulted with local officials and local planning agencies to determine if other projects or activities would occur in the area. No other projects were identified. The environmental impacts of the proposed rail connection have been addressed previously in this EA.

CHAPTER 6.0
SEA'S RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

CHAPTER 6.0

SEA’S RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

This Chapter summarizes SEA’s consultation with Federal, regional, state, and local agencies and officials regarding the proposed construction and operation over 1,800 feet of new connecting track. The mitigation described below is based on SEA’s evaluation of the information available to date, consultation with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies, and voluntary mitigation proposed by the Applicant.

6.1 OVERVIEWS OF SEA’S APPROACH TO MITIGATION

During the environmental assessment process, SEA has taken a “hard look” at the environmental consequences of PPHW’s proposed actions. In its environmental review, SEA conducted a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the potential environmental effects associated with the construction of new connecting track.

6.1.2 Scope of STB’s Conditioning Power

The Board has limited authority to impose conditions to mitigate potential environmental impacts. As a government agency, the Board can only impose conditions that are consistent with its statutory authority. Accordingly, any conditions the Board imposes must relate directly to the transaction it is licensing or exempting, must be reasonable, and must be supported by the record before the Board. Thus, the Board’s practice consistently has been to mitigate only those impacts that directly result from the proposed action. The Board does not have authority to require mitigation of pre-existing conditions, such as existing railroad operations or land development in the vicinity of the railroad. Further, the Board does not have authority to require mitigation with respect to matters entirely outside of its jurisdiction.

6.2 PRELIMINARY NATURE OF MITIGATION

SEA emphasizes that the recommended environmental mitigation measures in the EA are preliminary and it invites public and agency comments on these proposed environmental mitigation measures. In order for SEA to effectively assess the comments, it is critical that the public be specific regarding desired mitigation and the reasons why it would be appropriate. In addition, SEA requests the PPHW, communities, and other interested parties advise SEA of the status of any negotiations to address environmental concerns. If the parties execute a mutually acceptable binding agreement, they should immediately advise SEA in writing.

SEA will make its final recommendations on environmental mitigation to the Board in a Post-EA after considering all public comments on the EA and conducting further environmental analysis and agency consultation, as appropriate. The Board will then make its final decision regarding the project and any environmental conditions it might impose. When considering whether to grant final approval Proposed Actions, the Board will consider the potential environmental effects and the approximate cost of any environmental mitigation it might impose on the project. SEA preliminarily

recommends that any final decision by the Board approving the proposed construction of connecting track and subsequent rail abandonment be subject to the following mitigation measures.

PPHW's Voluntary Mitigation Measures

Based on traffic delay analysis, the following conclusions and recommendations are made concerning the proposed railroad crossing:

- The Highway-Rail Grade Crossing sign, commonly identified as the Crossbuck sign, should be installed on each University Street approach. The details of the signs can be found in Part 8 of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Millennium Edition.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (100 ft) sign should be installed on the southwest drive to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing on University Street soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the proposed University Street grade crossing and the northeast and northwest driveways (50 ft and 30 ft, respectively) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (nine vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on each driveway.
- Essentially no storage exists between the proposed tracks and the northwest driveway on University Street. Consideration for closure of this drive should be given. As the traffic volume on University Street grows, relocating the northeast driveway to the north to have a minimum of 200 ft distance from the centerline of the proposed railroad crossing could be considered.
- Based on the low amount of projected train traffic on the proposed railroad extension, combined with the low operating speed of the train the MUTCD does not warrant any active traffic control device at the proposed University Street crossing. However, if there is no illumination at the grade during the night hours, installing an active control device such as Flashing-Light signals could be considered.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (65 ft) sign should be installed on the closest northeast drive on North Allen Road to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the North Allen Road grade crossing and the closest northeast drive (65 ft) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (18 vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on the driveway.

SEA's Additional Mitigation Measures

SEA's recommendations include, but are not limited to, the following general mitigation measures:

Transportation and Safety

1. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) shall consult with the Illinois Department of Transportation and Peoria County prior to installation of the University Street highway/rail at-grade crossing order to minimize traffic delay during at-grade crossing construction. PPHW shall use appropriate signs and barricades to control traffic during construction.
2. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult with the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Department of Transportation regarding its proposed voluntary mitigation measures and the selection of appropriate highway/rail at-grade warning protection and report the results of this consultation to SEA.
3. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) or its designated contractor shall consult with the appropriate public transportation agencies prior to the scheduling of lane restrictions or road closures, as well as detour approvals. PPHW or its designated contractor shall be responsible for the cost of all permits, detours, coordination with local officials and agencies, and public notifications related to temporary lane restrictions or road closures.
4. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consider maintenance of emergency response capabilities and school bus schedules in planning and executing the necessary road work.

Land Use

5. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall ensure that all areas disturbed by project-related construction activities which are not located on the railroad's property (such as access roads, haul roads, etc.) are promptly restored as closely to their original condition, as is practical, following conclusion of project-related construction activities at that site.

Water Resources

6. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult with the appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies with regard to implementation of techniques to minimize impacts to wetlands and water bodies.
7. In instances in which the City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) uses contractors to apply herbicides, for right-of-way maintenance,

PPHW shall use only contractors trained in herbicide application and shall require those contractors to follow label directions in applying herbicides and limit the amount potentially entering waterways. PPHW shall require contractors to use only herbicides regulated for such uses with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and follow all state regulations that requires their use.

Biological Resources

8. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall use Best Management Practices to control erosion, runoff, and surface instability during construction activities.

Air Quality

9. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall consult and comply with all applicable Federal, state, and local regulations regarding the control of fugitive dust. Fugitive dust emissions created during construction and abandonment activities shall be minimized by using such control methods as water spraying, installation of wind barriers, and chemical treatment.

Noise

10. The City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad shall control temporary noise from equipment used during construction activities through the use and maintenance of muffler systems on machinery.

Cultural Resources

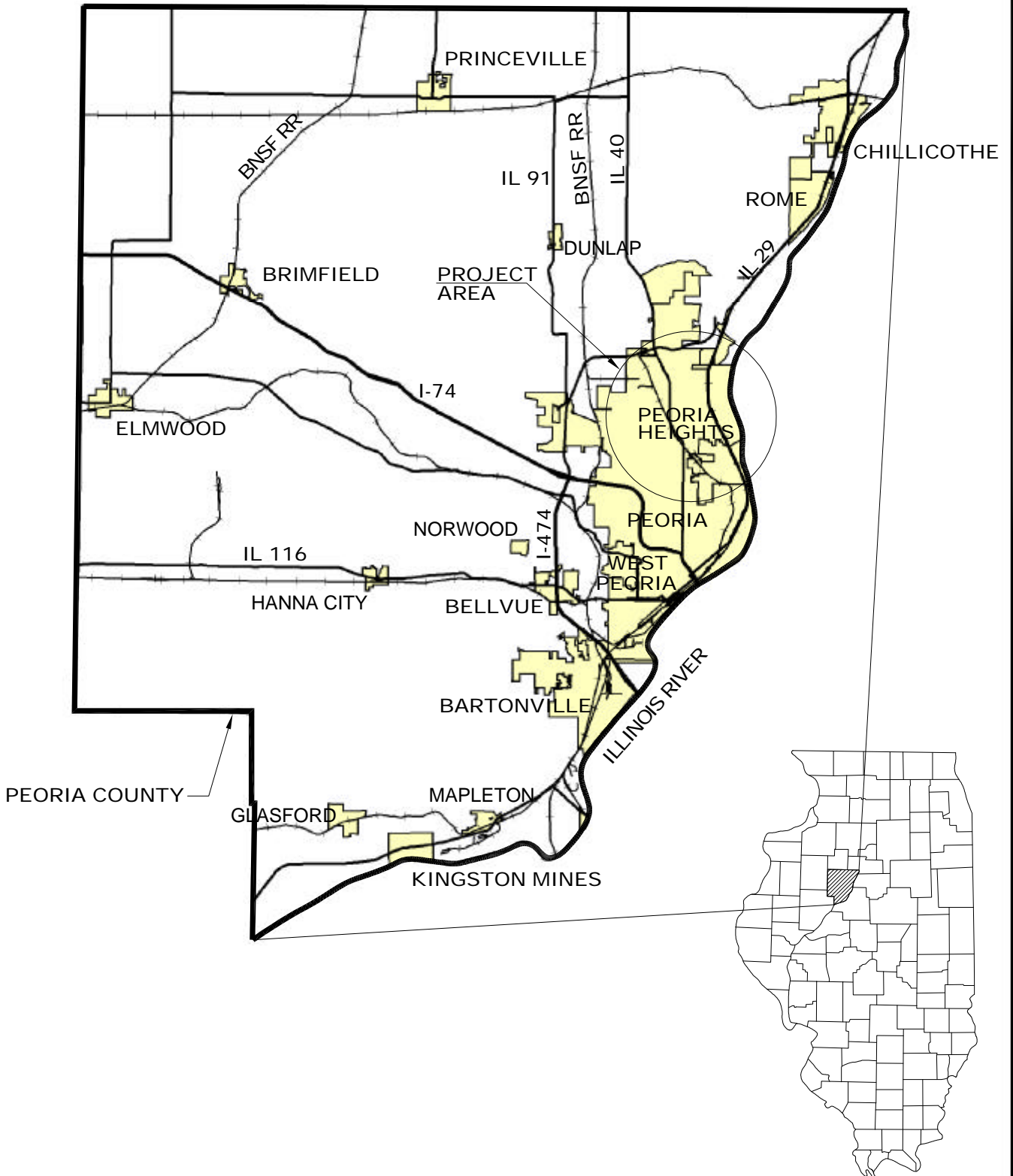
11. If the City of Peoria, d/b/a Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) discovers any undiscovered archaeological remains or other cultural resources during construction activities, PPHW shall immediately cease work, and contact the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency regarding appropriate measures to protect the resource.

CHAPTER 7.0
REFERENCES

CHAPTER 7.0 REFERENCES

1. United States Geological Survey Spring Bay, Illinois. [Map] 1:24,000 – Scale Topographic Map: 7.5-Minute Series (Topographic). 1996.
2. United States Geological Survey Peoria East, Illinois. [Map] 1:24,000 – Scale Topographic Map: 7.5-Minute Series (Topographic). 1996.
3. United States Geological Survey Dunlap, Illinois. [Map] 1:24,000 – Scale Topographic Map: 7.5-Minute Series (Topographic). 1996.
4. United States Geological Survey Peoria West, Illinois. [Map] 1:24,000 – Scale Topographic Map: 7.5-Minute Series (Topographic). 1996.
5. United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. *Soil Survey of Peoria County, Illinois*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1992.
6. United States Department of the Interior. *National Wetland Inventory Maps*.
7. United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *1980 Census Data*.
8. United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *1990 Census Data*.
9. United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *2000 Census Data*.
10. Surface Transportation Board's Website. *Environmental Rules and Guide to Environmental Rules*. 2003
11. United States Environmental Protection Agency's Website. *Environmapper*. 2003
12. Peoria Journal Star, June 26, 2001. "Keller Branch issue chugging along."

APPENDIX A
PROJECT FIGURES



© Copyright Hanson Professional Services Inc. 2003

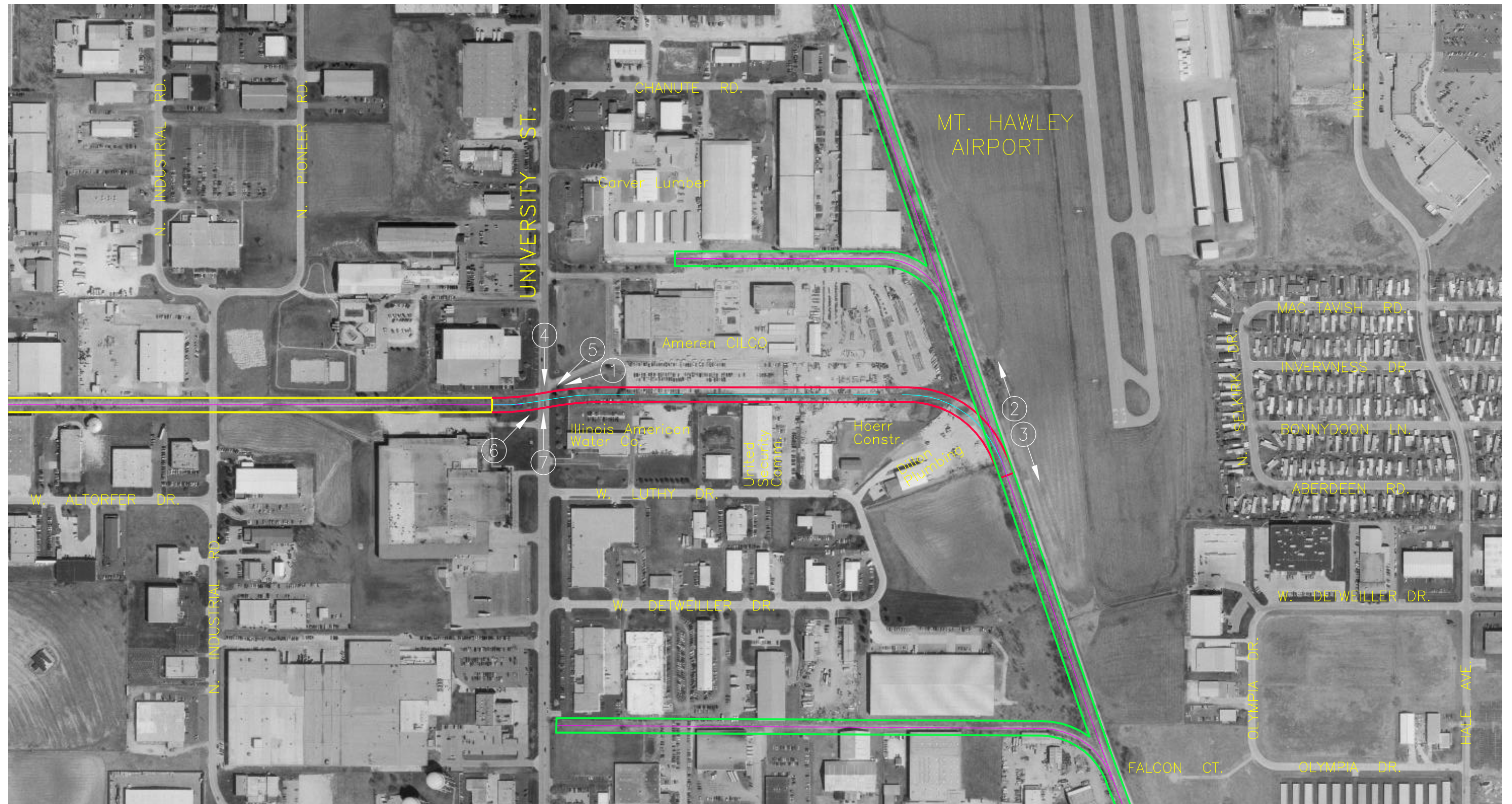
PROJECT LOCATION MAP

KELLER BRANCH RAIL
CONSTRUCTION & ABANDONMENT
PEORIA, ILLINOIS

HANSON NO. 02P2007

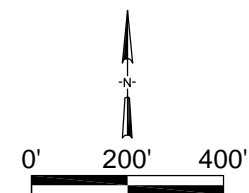
FIGURE NO. 1

HANSON
Hanson Professional Services Inc.
2900 West Willow Knolls Road
Peoria, Illinois 61614-1129



LEGEND

- SPUR ACQUIRED FROM UNION PACIFIC
- CONNECTION TO BE CONSTRUCTED
- KELLER BRANCH TO REMAIN



© Copyright Hanson Professional Services Inc. 2004

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES MAP

KELLER BRANCH
RAIL CONSTRUCTION AND ABANDONMENT
PEORIA, ILLINOIS

HANSON NO. 02P2007

FIGURE NO. 2

APPENDIX B
PHOTOGRAPHIC LOG

**PHOTOGRAPHIC LOG
KELLER BRANCH RAIL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
FEBRUARY 11, 2003 AND OCTOBER 13, 2003**

Photograph Number	Description
1	University Street Crossing, Viewing West
2	Behind Dillon Plumbing, Viewing North
3	Behind Dillon Plumbing, Viewing South
4	University Street Crossing, Viewing South
5	University Street Crossing, Viewing West
6	University Street Crossing, Viewing East
7	University Street Crossing, Viewing North

KELLER BRANCH RAIL CONSTRUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS 10/13/03



University Street Crossing Viewing West - beginning of new construction



Behind Dillon Plumbing, Viewing North - end of new construction



Behind Dillon Plumbing, Viewing South - end of new construction

KELLER BRANCH RAIL CONSTRUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS 2/11/03



University Street Crossing, Viewing South



University Street Crossing, Viewing West



University Street Crossing, Viewing East



University Street Crossing, Viewing North

APPENDIX C
AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

An early coordination document informing appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies of the proposed project and requesting comments was distributed on September 5, 2003. The following agencies received a coordination document.

Agencies which Commented:

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Peoria County Department of Zoning and Planning
Village of Peoria Heights
U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Army- Corps of Engineers - Rock Island District
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency- Region 5
Peoria Park District
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois Department of Agriculture
Illinois Department of Transportation – Division of Highways / District 4

Agencies which did not Comment:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service
Council on Environmental Quality
U.S. Coast Guard
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Illinois Commerce Commission
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois State Historic Society
Illinois Natural History Survey
Illinois State Geological Survey
Peoria SWCD
City of Peoria – Mayors Office
City of Peoria Economic Development Department
City of Peoria- Planning and Growth Management Department
City of Peoria Public Works Department
Peoria Historical Society
Peoria Police Department
Peoria County Highway Department
Pioneer Railcorp



TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

1ST VICE CHAIRMAN
George W. Murray
Village of Peoria Heights

TREASURER
Joyce M. Antonini
Tazewell County Board

CHAIRMAN
Larry Koch
Tazewell County Board

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Terry D. Kohlbus

2ND VICE CHAIRMAN
Robert E. Huschen
Woodford County Board

SECRETARY
Sharon Kennedy
Peoria County Board

October 23, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services Inc.
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Re: Request for comments/consultation on proposed construction of 1,800 ft of connecting track and abandonment of 7.5 miles of existing track in Peoria County, Illinois

Dear Mr. Seals,

The existing Keller Branch rail line the Peoria, Peoria Heights, and Western Railroad (PPHW) is considering abandoning is an integral link in completing the overall Rock Island State Trail. This link will not only improve the region's recreational capabilities, but will also supply an opportunity to enhance public awareness of local ecosystems in Central Illinois.

Trail users have an opportunity to experience urban, prairie, wooded, and agricultural environments as they explore trails. The Keller Branch rail line currently under consideration for abandonment will complete the final link to the 27-mile Rock Island State Trail. This trail will further expose trail users to our most unique and valuable natural resources; the Illinois River Bluffs and the Illinois River. It is this personal connection with local habitats and natural resources that inevitably gets the community committed in volunteer conservation efforts.

The *Mossville Bluffs Watershed Restoration Master Plan*, completed in 2001 through the collaborative efforts of the City of Peoria, Peoria County, and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, outlines opportunities to restore forested bluffs such as those seen along the Keller Branch in an effort to reduce erosion and sedimentation of the Illinois River. By granting the public access to our natural areas, these sites would be prime locations for habitat restoration and public education on watershed issues; these types of projects may otherwise go unnoticed by the community.

Please know that the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission fully supports this undertaking. This is an excellent opportunity for the citizens of the City of Peoria, and all the surrounding communities to experience the diversity of the Peoria County landscape. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Environmental Planner, Melissa Eaton at 309/673-9796 x 232.

Sincerely,

Larry G. Koch
Chair, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Cc: Steve Van Winkle, City of Peoria



TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

1ST VICE CHAIRMAN
George W. Murray
Village of Peoria Heights

TREASURER
Joyce M. Antonini
Tazewell County Board

CHAIRMAN
Larry Koch
Tazewell County Board

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Terry D. Kohlbus

2ND VICE CHAIRMAN
Robert E. Huschen
Woodford County Board

SECRETARY
Sharon Kennedy
Peoria County Board

October 28, 2003

Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services Inc.
Springfield, IL 62703

Re: Request for comments/consultation on proposed construction of 1,800 ft of connecting track and abandonment of 7.5 miles of existing track in Peoria County, Illinois

Dear Mr. Seals,

In your letter we received on September 15th, we were notified that the Peoria, Peoria Heights, and Western Railroad (PPHW) would like to abandon approximately 7.5 miles of the existing Keller Branch rail line. If this abandonment is approved, the end result would be the creation of a recreational trail. Furthermore, this trail would connect the Pimetoui Trail with the Rock Island Trail. We would like to express our support for the creation of this recreational trail.

The existing Keller Branch rail line is an integral link in completing the overall Rock Island State Trail. This link will not only improve the region's recreational capabilities, but will also enhance the region's quality of life. This quality of life translates to economic development in attracting people to the area. Housing has also proven to benefit from nearby trails; property values are consistently higher for housing near trails.

Please know that the Peoria/Pekin Urbanized Area Transportation Study (PPUATS) fully supports this undertaking. This is an excellent opportunity for not only the City of Peoria, but for all of the surrounding communities that will benefit the recreational opportunities the trail will offer. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Transportation Planner, Joshua Barbée, at 673-9796, x223.

Sincerely,

Earl Carter
Chair, PPUATS Policy Committee

Cc: Steve Van Winkle, City of Peoria



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 NORTH GRAND AVENUE EAST, P.O. BOX 19276, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62794-9276, 217-782-3397
JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER, 100 WEST RANDOLPH, SUITE 11-300, CHICAGO, IL 60601, 312-814-6026

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, GOVERNOR

RENEE CIPRIANO, DIRECTOR

217/782-0547

October 20, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Re: City of Peoria, IL, d.b.a. Peoria, Peoria Heights
and Western Railroad-Construction Exemption
and Abandonment Exemption – in Peoria County

Dear Mr. Seals:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rail line construction and abandonment project in the City of Peoria, Illinois.

The Agency has no objections to the project; however, construction site activity stormwater NPDES permit will be required from the Division of Water Pollution Control. Please contact Alan Keller at 217/782-0610 for specific permit requirements.

Sincerely,

Bernard P. Killian
Deputy Director



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1507 • Teletypewriter Only (217) 524-7128

Voice (217) 782-4836

Peoria County
Peoria Heights
W of IL Rt 29
HANSON-02P2007
Western Railroad Track Construction

PLEASE REFER TO: IHPA LOG #016090803

October 17, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Dear Sir:

We have reviewed the documentation submitted for the referenced project(s) in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.4. Based upon the information provided, no historic properties are affected. We, therefore, have no objection to the undertaking proceeding as planned.

Please retain this letter in your files as evidence of compliance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. This clearance remains in effect for two (2) years from date of issuance. It does not pertain to any discovery during construction, nor is it a clearance for purposes of the Illinois Human Skeletal Remains Protection Act (20 ILCS 3440).

If you are an applicant, please submit a copy of this letter to the state or federal agency from which you obtain any permit, license, grant, or other assistance.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

AEH



Illinois
Department of
Agriculture

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor • Chuck Hartke, Director

Bureau of Land and Water Resources

State Fairgrounds • P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/782-6297 • TDD 217/524-6858 • Fax 217/557-0993

October 11, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 S. Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703-2886

Re: City of Peoria
Rail Line Construction
Peoria County, Illinois
U.S. Dept. of Transportation's Surface Transportation Board

Dear Mr. Seals:

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) has reviewed the above-referenced project for its compliance with the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT's) Agricultural Land Preservation Policy per the mandate of the state's Farmland Preservation Act (505 ILCS 75/1 et seq.).

The proposed new rail line would connect two segments of rail line currently owned by the Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW). According to the information provided by your company, all construction of 1,800 feet of new rail line will be on land owned by or that has an easement by PPHW. Additionally, Peoria is proposing to abandon 7.5 miles of existing track traversing through the City of Peoria. All of the affected property is zoned for an industrial use by the City of Peoria.

Because the project is within Peoria's corporate boundaries and agricultural land is not affected by the proposal, the IDA has determined that the railroad improvements are exempt from further review in accordance with Section 2.c of the IDA-IDOT Cooperative Working Agreement on the protection of Illinois farmland.

The IDA would consider IDOT's funding of the rail improvements to be an action that is consistent with the IDOT's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy and complies with the state's Farmland Preservation Act.

Sincerely,

Steve Frank, Chief
Bureau of Land and Water Resources

SF:JL

cc: Don Highley, IDOT
Josh Joseph, Peoria County SWCD
Agency Project File

Illinois Nature Preserves



Commission

One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702-1271
217/785-8686

October 2, 2003

Hanson Professional Services Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

ATTN: Mr. Kevin Seals

Dear Mr. Seals:

On behalf of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed construction of 1,800 foot of connecting track and abandonment of 7.5 miles of existing track in Peoria County, Illinois (Hanson No. 02P2007). After a review of the proposed project, it appears that the project does not pose a threat to an area dedicated as a State Nature Preserve or registered as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act (525 ILCS 30).

Further, a preliminary review suggests that there are no Illinois Natural Areas Inventory sites or endangered or threatened species within the proposed project area. However, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will be able to provide more specific information on the location of Illinois Natural Areas Inventory sites and threatened and endangered species.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed project.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn T. Grosboll".

Carolyn Taft Grosboll
Director

cc: Angella Moorehouse, INPC
Keith Shank, IDNR



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

B-19J

September 30, 2003

Mr. Kevin Seals
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Re: Docket No. AB-858X, *Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad-Rail Line Construction and Abandonment*

Dear Mr. Seals:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed your letter dated September 5, 2003. The letter advises the Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) is considering a rail line construction and abandonment in the City of Peoria, Illinois. Our comments in this letter are provided pursuant to NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We appreciate the opportunity to review these proposed actions at such an early juncture in the process. Pursuant to a review of these letters, we feel the following issues should be addressed by additional detail in the Environmental Report (ER) to be provided to the Surface Transportation Board.

- Specific information pertaining to removal of the rail and salvage methods. In particular, applicable environmental regulations for removal and ultimate disposal of rails and roadbed material should be listed;
- The final disposition of crossties preserved with creosote. Per the July 3, 1984 Rebuttable Presumption Against Registration for three major wood preservatives under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, wood treated with creosote should be buried in a non-hazardous waste landfill unless otherwise required by the relevant State;
- Procedures for storing and fueling of construction equipment in upland areas, away from water bodies, floodplains or other sensitive habitat;
- Procedures for the prevention and/or control of spills (i.e., fuels, lubricants or other pollutants) from construction equipment; and
- Soil erosion and stormwater runoff mitigation practices to be utilized during abandonment activities. In particular, consideration of whether all or portions of the right-of-way will be revegetated with native flora should be addressed. Long-term benefits of this mitigation activity go beyond stormwater and soil protection to include development of habitat for wildlife and improved aesthetics.

Inclusion of the above information in the ER would satisfy routine questions from the EPA and facilitate a quicker review and approval process.

Please forward future correspondence regarding these items to me at the above address. Should you have any questions, please contact me or Kathleen Kowal of my office at (312) 353-5206.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
Environmental Planning and Evaluation Branch



PLEASURE DRIVEWAY and PARK DISTRICT of PEORIA, ILLINOIS

Glen Oak Park Administrative Offices ▪ 2218 N. Prospect Road
Peoria, IL 61603 ▪ Phone (309) 682-1200 ▪ Fax (309) 686-3352

September 23, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

RE: STB Finance Docket 34395 and Docket No. AB-858X
City of Peoria, Illinois, d.b.a. Peoria, Peoria Heights and
Western Railroad-Construction, Exemption and Abandonment
Exemption-in Peoria County, Illinois

Request for Comments/Consultation on Proposed Construction
of 1,800 ft of Connecting Track and Abandonment of 7.5 miles
of Existing Track in Peoria County, Illinois
Hanson No. 02P2007

Dear Mr. Seals:

The proposed construction of 1,800 feet of new rail line will connect the Union Pacific Railroad to the recently acquired 1.9 mile length of railroad spur to the northern customers along the existing Kellar Branch. The proposed abandonment and railbanking of approximately 7.5 miles of the Kellar Branch south of Pioneer Parkway will allow the Peoria Park District, in partnership with the City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights, to construct a 7.5 mile shared use urban bikeway. The proposed bikeway will connect the 26 mile Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Rock Island Bicycle Trail with the completed downtown Peoria portion of the Rock Island/Pimiteoui Bicycle Trail. The completed downtown portion is already in position to link to shared bicycle trail segments on the east side of the Illinois River. Communities served by the proposed completed trail system include Toulon, Wyoming, Princeville, Dunlap, Peoria Heights, and Peoria located west of the Illinois River. Communities on the east side that would eventually be connected include Washington, East Peoria, Morton, and Pekin. The completed project will be the only non-motorized vehicular transportation means between these communities and provide over eighty-three miles of shared use bicycle trail in Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford Counties.

In addition to the Peoria Park District's interest and commitment in building and maintaining the proposed urban bicycle trail, the Illinois Department's of Transportation and Natural Resources have granted separate state and federal dollars for the construction of the local trail system. The Peoria Park District has secured local match dollars and has intergovernmental agreements with the City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights to build and maintain the proposed bicycle trail. The shared use trail is part of the Peoria Park District's Master Plan, the

PEORIA PARK BOARD

TIMOTHY J. CASSIDY
President

ROGER P. ALLEN
Trustee

STANLEY P. BUDZINSKI
Trustee

JAMES A. CUMMINGS
Trustee

ROBERT L. JOHNSON, SR.
Trustee

JACQUELINE J. PETTY
Trustee

MATTHEW P. RYAN
Trustee

BONNIE W. NOBLE - Director of Parks and Recreation

City of Peoria's Comprehensive Plan and the Heartland Riverfront Master Plan. The proposed improvement is also consistent with the Illinois State Trails Plan and the Illinois SCORP plan. The project is endorsed by all sponsors, the Regional Trail Advisory Task Force, The Illinois Valley Wheelmen, Greater Peoria Transit District, Illinois Department of Transportation, CILCO / Ameren, Peoria School District 150 and State and Federal legislators. In total, over \$11,000,000 in federal, state and local dollars have been appropriated for portions of the bicycle trail and Illinois River crossing. The Peoria Park District and its consultants have nearly completed the engineering of the proposed trail. At risk is nearly \$3,800,000 in appropriated federal, state and local dollars for construction if the Kellar Branch is not railbanked.

The benefit of the proposed trail is this trail will connect to other trails in the Peoria metropolitan area resulting in over eighty miles of continuous bicycle trail. This trail system will connect homes, businesses, parks, schools, restaurants, shopping, historic attractions and major employment centers. The improvement will create a safer environment for bicyclists and pedestrians and provide an alternative mode of transportation. The proposed trail will link neighborhoods currently separated by high traffic volume highways (I #74, IL #6, IL #24, IL #29, IL #40 and US #150).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Wheeler", with a stylized, cursive script.

David Wheeler,
Administrative Assistant



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
CLOCK TOWER BUILDING - P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS 61204-2004

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

<http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil>

September 18, 2003

Operations Division

SUBJECT: CEMVR-OD-P-452420

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Hanson Professional Services
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Dear Mr. Seals:

Our office reviewed all information provided to us concerning the proposed railroad construction and abandonment activities in Peoria County, Illinois.

We determined your project as proposed does not require a Department of the Army (DA) Section 404 permit. The decision regarding this action is based on information found in the administrative record which documents the District's decision-making process, the basis for the decision, and the final decision. No indication of discharge of dredged or fill material was found to occur in waters of the United States (including wetlands). Therefore, this determination resulted.

You are advised that this determination for your project is valid for five years from the date of this letter. If the project is not completed within this five-year period or your project plans change, you should contact our office for another determination.

Although a DA Section 404 permit is not required for the project as proposed, you must still acquire other applicable Federal, state, and local permits.

Should you have any questions, please contact our Regulatory Branch by letter, or telephone me at 309/794-5674.

Sincerely,

Gene W. Walsh
Project Manager
Enforcement Section



Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Highways / District 4
401 Main Street / Peoria, Illinois / 61602-1111
Telephone 309/671-3333

September 16, 2003

BUREAU OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STUDIES & PLANS

Hanson Professional Services
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62703

Attention: Mr. Kevin Seals

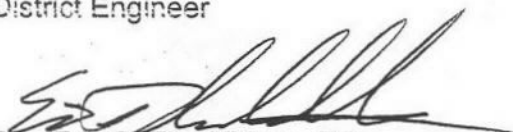
Dear Mr. Seals:

The Department has reviewed your letter dated September 5, 2003 regarding the proposed construction/extension of a connecting track in North Peoria. It appears that the proposed improvement will have minimal impact on the State Highway System. The impact of the increase in the number of trains that will cross Allen Road (current IDOT jurisdiction) should be addressed in the Environmental document.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Very truly yours,

Joseph E. Crowe, PE
District Engineer


By: Eric S. Therkildsen, PE
Program Development Engineer

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cc: File



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Rock Island Field Office
4469 48th Avenue Court
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Phone: (309) 793-5800 Fax: (309) 793-5804



IN REPLY REFER
TO:

FWS/RIFO

September 10, 2003

Hanson Professional Services Inc.

Attn: Kevin M. Seals
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62703

Dear Mr. Seals:

This is in response to your letter of September 5, 2003, requesting our comments regarding federally listed threatened and endangered species for the proposed Hanson Project No. 02P2007, rail line construction and abandonment in the City of Peoria, Illinois.

With respect to any federally listed threatened or endangered species, we are furnishing you the following list of species known to occur or potentially occur in Peoria County.

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Common Name (Scientific Name)</u>	<u>Habitat</u>
Threatened	Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Wintering
Threatened	Decurrent false aster (<i>Boltonia decurrens</i>)	Illinois River floodplain
Threatened	Prairie bush clover (<i>Lespedeza leptostachya</i>)	Dry to mesic prairies
Threatened	Eastern prairie fringed orchid (<i>Platanthera leucophaea</i>)	Wet grassland

The threatened **bald eagle** is listed as wintering in Peoria County, Illinois. During the winter, this species feeds on fish in the open water areas created by dam tailwaters, the warm water effluents of power plants and municipal and industrial discharges, or in power plant cooling ponds. The more severe the winter, the greater the ice coverage and the more concentrated the eagles become. They roost at night in groups in large trees adjacent to the river in areas that are

protected from the harsh winter elements. They perch in large shoreline trees to rest or feed on fish. There is no critical habitat designated for this species. The eagle may not be harassed, harmed, or disturbed when present nor may nest trees be cleared.

The **decurrent false aster** is listed as threatened and is known to occur in the Illinois River floodplain in Peoria County. It is also considered to potentially occur in any county bordering the Illinois River and the counties bordering the Mississippi River between the mouths of the Missouri River and the Ohio River. It occupies disturbed alluvial soils in the floodplains of these rivers. There is no critical habitat listed for this species in Illinois.

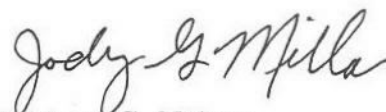
The threatened **eastern prairie fringed orchid** occupies wet grassland habitats and potentially occurs throughout the State of Illinois. Federal regulations prohibit any commercial activity involving this species or the destruction, malicious damage or removal of this species from Federal land or any other lands in knowing violation of State law or regulation, including State criminal trespass law. This species should be searched for whenever wet prairie remnants are encountered.

The threatened **prairie bush clover** occupies dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil and also potentially occurs throughout the State of Illinois. Federal regulations prohibit any commercial activity involving this species or the destruction, malicious damage or removal of this species from Federal land or any other lands in knowing violation of State law or regulation, including State criminal trespass law. This species should be searched for whenever prairie remnants are encountered.

These comments provide technical assistance only and do not constitute a report of the Secretary of the Interior on a project within the meaning of Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, do not fulfill the requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, nor do they represent the review comments of the U.S. Department of the Interior on any forthcoming environmental statement.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Ginger Molitor of my staff at (309) 793-5800 ext. 212.

Sincerely,


for Richard C. Nelson
Supervisor

HANSON ENGINEERS INC.
TELEPHONE MEMORANDUM
(Form QAP 17.2.1)
Revision 0

PARTY CALLED K. SEALS
PERSON CALLING MATT WALL - DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ZONING
TIME 2³⁰ DATE 9/9/03 PROJECT NO. 02P2007
PROJECT KELLER BRANCH PROJECT
SUBJECT AGENCY COORDINATION

Project is within jurisdiction of Peoria & Peoria Heights. Matt is the Director of Planning & Zoning in Peoria County & called to inform me that they have no jurisdiction & therefore no comments to the project.

Matt's Number is:

(309) 672-6915

BY


(SIGNATURE)

COPY TO

File.

HANSON ENGINEERS INC.
TELEPHONE MEMORANDUM
(Form QAP 17.2.1)
Revision 0

PARTY CALLED K. Seals
PERSON CALLING EARL CARTER - (309) 686-2373
TIME 12:50 DATE 9/8/03 PROJECT NO. 02P2007
PROJECT Keller Branch Project
SUBJECT AGENCY COORDINATION

EARL is the Mayor of Peoria Heights & called to inform us that Peoria Heights is not identified on our Project Location Map included in the Coordination Packet. I thanked Earl for bringing this to our attention & that we make sure that this is corrected on the figures to be used in the EA for STB's review.

BY 
(SIGNATURE)

COPY TO File

APPENDIX D
TRAFFIC DELAY ANALYSIS

TRAFFIC DELAY ANALYSIS UNIVERSITY STREET AND NORTH ALLEN STREET AT-GRADE CROSSINGS PEORIA, ILLINOIS

The study team analyzed potential traffic related impacts due to the proposed railroad extension across University Street, east of the existing rail crossing on North Allen Road. As part of the traffic analysis, the study team examined the existing traffic conditions in the vicinity of the proposed railroad extension and its impact on North Allen Road and University Street traffic conditions for the construction year (2004).

EXISTING TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

Before the impact to traffic of the proposed at-grade rail crossing at University Street and the impact to traffic for the existing North Allen Road at-grade rail crossing can be assessed, it is first necessary to evaluate the existing conditions of the transportation system. A brief description of the highway system in the vicinity of the proposed railroad extension is listed below:

Existing Geometries

North Allen Road

At the existing rail crossing, North Allen Road consists of two travel lanes (one 12-ft through lane in each direction) and a center 12-ft turn lane. North and south of the existing rail crossing, North Allen Road becomes a five-lane roadway (two through lanes in each direction with a center turn lane). The existing rail crossing is currently controlled by side and overhead flashing lights, but is not gated.

Driveways North of North Allen Road Grade Crossing

There are two driveways currently serving a commercial property located in the northeast quadrant of the crossing. The centerlines of these driveways are approximately 65 ft and 325 ft from the rail crossing.

West Altorfer Drive/West Pioneer Road

West Altorfer Drive/West Pioneer Road is a two-lane roadway currently serving commercial properties on both sides of North Allen Road. The centerline of this roadway is approximately 325 ft south of the existing North Allen Road rail crossing.

University Street

South of the proposed railroad crossing, University Street has four 12 ft travel lanes (two through lanes in each direction). North of the proposed railroad crossing location, it continues as a 24-ft, two-lane roadway with ditches on both sides of the road.

Driveway Northeast of University Street

There is a driveway currently serving the AmerenCilco office building and supply yard located to the northeast side of the proposed railroad crossing. The centerline of drive is approximately 50 ft from the centerline of the railroad.

Driveway Northwest of University Street

There is a driveway currently serving the Ferguson office and warehouse located to the northwest side of the proposed railroad crossing. The centerline of the drive is approximately 30 ft from the centerline of the railroad.

Driveway Southwest of University Street

There is a driveway located to the southwest side of the proposed railroad crossing currently serving a warehouse. The centerline of drive is approximately 100 ft from the centerline of the railroad.

Traffic Counts

Twenty four-hour traffic counts were collected in December 2003 on University Street to the north and south of the proposed grade railroad crossing location. The collected 24 traffic counts, by one hour intervals, are shown in Table 1. The count shows an increase in daily traffic over a 2001 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count of 6,800 reported by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IL-DOT). While the ADT count for 2003 would be lower than the one day count that was collected, to be conservative, the higher count is utilized in all subsequent calculations.

North Allen Road 2001 ADT counts from IL-DOT were projected to 2003 ADT counts using the University Street traffic projection rates. IL-DOT 2001 ADT counts on North Allen Road show 13,900 and 14,300 ADT to the north and south of the grade crossing, respectively. This was adjusted to 16,063 and 17,383 to represent 2003 ADT counts. This count constitutes a fairly heavy growth rate and should be considered very conservative.

LEVEL OF SERVICE AT-GRADE RAIL ROAD CROSSING

No specific measure of efficiency is currently prescribed for calculating vehicle delay for at-grade railroad crossings. We utilized Level of Service (LOS) criteria for signalized intersections due to the similarities between signalized intersections and at-grade railroad crossings.

Intersection Capacity Analysis

The intersection's capacity was evaluated by using The Highway Capacity Software (HCS) 2000, which is based on Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) 2000 methodology. Capacity analyses indicate how well an intersection is operating by applying a grading system called level-of-service that defines the quality of traffic operations on a street system.

Levels-of-service (LOS) can range from Level A for the best traffic operation to Level F for the poorest traffic operation. Table 2 shows criteria for LOS for signalized intersections. As the table illustrates, LOS is directly related to the control delay for signalized intersections.

The LOS at the proposed grade railroad crossing for the construction year (2004) traffic on North Allen Road and University Street were determined in order to estimate the impact of proposed crossing on traffic operations. Based on year 2001 ADT and the collected counts, traffic on North Allen Road and University Street are not expected to grow from the 2003 count that was collected to the construction year (2004) ADT.

Based on the existing operations on the existing railroad spur in the area, the average train speed was assumed to be 6 mph at the proposed grade crossings. Two trains per day (one inbound and one outbound) will use the proposed tracks. The average train length was assumed to be a maximum of 400 ft (four car trains, with engine).

Vehicle Delays from Single Train Events

To determine LOS, vehicle delays from single train events were analyzed by calculating the following parameters:

Table 1: Hourly Traffic on University Street to the South and North of Proposed Grade Railroad Crossing Location

Starting Hour	SBDL, S. of RR Tracks	SBIL, S. of RR Tracks	SBDL, N. of RR Tracks	NBIL, S. of RR Tracks	NBDL, S. of RR Tracks	NBDL, N. of RR Tracks
12:00 PM	104	248	330	251	71	299
1:00 PM	84	152	230	235	53	268
2:00 PM	79	180	251	218	53	263
3:00 PM	103	280	359	284	78	340
4:00 PM	128	276	348	365	53	417
5:00 PM	87	198	271	308	37	347
6:00 PM	55	128	180	173	18	184
7:00 PM	34	77	105	101	11	112
8:00 PM	25	74	92	61	11	65
9:00 PM	14	43	54	44	6	48
10:00 PM	4	15	19	25	5	29
11:00 PM	2	20	23	14	1	15
12:00 AM	2	2	3	5	2	7
1:00 AM	2	3	4	13	1	14
2:00 AM	3	10	13	9	1	10
3:00 AM	1	6	7	3	2	2
4:00 AM	3	10	12	11	2	12
5:00 AM	7	23	33	52	7	58
6:00 AM	43	99	148	155	27	167
7:00 AM	112	186	323	257	95	287
8:00 AM	90	206	307	247	63	267
9:00 AM	74	136	203	231	42	261
10:00 AM	84	189	256	191	34	221
11:00 AM	110	237	324	242	43	269
Daily Traffic	1251	2801	3896	3498	716	3962
Peak Hour Traffic	128	298	375	365	78	417

Table 2: Level of Service (LOS) Criteria for
Signalized Intersection

LOS	Control Delay (sec/veh)
A	≤ 10
B	$> 10-20$
C	$> 20-35$
D	$> 35-55$
E	$> 55-80$
F	> 80

Blocked Crossing Time Per Train

The time required for a train to pass by the grade crossing is defined as the Blocked Crossing Time. The following equation was used to calculate the blocked time per train (D_C):

$$\text{Blocked Crossing Time } (D_C) = [L/(V*88)] + 0.50$$

- D_C = Time required in minutes, for the train to pass the grade crossing, including the time required for gate closing and opening
- L = Train length, in feet
- V = Train speed, in miles per hour, over the grade crossing
- 88 = Conversion factor from miles per hour to feet per minute
- 0.50 = Time required, in minutes, for gate closing and opening before and after train passage

Crossing Delay Per Stopped Vehicle

The crossing delay per stopped vehicle (D_A) represents the average amount of time that a driver would have to wait at a railroad crossing for a train to pass. The crossing delay per stopped vehicle was calculated for the proposed grade crossing. It was assumed that vehicles arrive at the railroad crossing in a uniform distribution in order to simplify the analysis. The following equation was used to calculate the crossing delay per stopped vehicle:

$$\text{Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle } (D_A) = (D_C * (S_C / S_C \cdot S_Q)) / 2$$

- D_A = Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle, in minutes
- D_C = Blocked crossing time per train, in minutes, including gate opening and closing
- S_C = Vehicle departure rate, per minute per lane. Assume a value of 1,400 vehicles per hour per lane (equivalent to 23.3 vehicles per minute per lane)

- S_Q = Average arrival rate of traffic in vehicles per minute per lane. This value was obtained from the collected peak hour volume data
- 2 = An average factor used to account for vehicles that do not experience delays for the entire time that the train blocks the highway grade crossing

Vehicle Delays from Entire Day Train Events

To evaluate the effects that would occur over an entire day from multiple train events the following parameters analyzed:

Number of Vehicles Delayed per Day

The number of vehicles delayed per day (T_D) represents the number of vehicles in a 24-hour period that would be stopped for trains at a railroad crossing. The number of vehicles delayed per day at a railroad crossing was estimated using the following equation:

$$\text{Vehicles delay per day } (T_D) = [D_C / 1440] * N * ADT$$

- T_D = Number of vehicles delayed per day
- D_C = Blocked crossing time per train, in minutes, including time for gate closing and opening
- 1,440 = Minutes per day
- N = Number of trains per day
- ADT = Average Daily Traffic on highway

Average Delay for All Vehicles

The average delay for all vehicles (D_V) is the estimated delay experienced by all drivers at the affected highway crossing, including vehicles not delayed by train traffic. The following equation was used to estimate the average delay for all vehicles:

$$\text{Average Delay for all Vehicles } (D_V) = D_C * N * D_A * 0.0833 * (24/1440)$$

- D_V = Average delay for all vehicles, in minutes per vehicle
- D_C = Blocked crossing time per train, in minutes, including gate opening and closing
- N = Number of trains per day
- D_A = Crossing delay per stopped vehicle, in minutes
- 24 = Number of hours per day
- 1,440 = Number of minutes per day

0.0833 = A factor used to double the uniform hourly traffic distribution as a proportion of daily traffic. This factor approximates a 95 percent confidence level that the peak-queue length (or delay) would not exceed twice the average.

Level of Service (LOS)

Level of service is directly related to the calculated average delay for all vehicles (D_v). Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of LOS at the existing North Allen Road grade crossing, based on calculations for crossing delays and vehicle delay counts. As seen in the Table 3, both the before and after analysis, with one train trip and two train trips per day, respectively, indicate that proposed rail extension would not result in adverse transportation impacts to LOS on North Allen Road. Therefore, no mitigation is warranted based on LOS.

Similarly, the proposed University Street grade crossing results, which are illustrated in Table 4, indicate that the proposed grade crossing would not result in adverse transportation impacts to LOS on University Street. Therefore, no mitigation is warranted based on LOS.

Grade Railroad Crossing Safety

Safety concerns increase when LOS deteriorates to LOS E and LOS F. At LOS E and LOS F, drivers become frustrated and lose patience. Drivers may make rash decisions due to impatience. Judgment becomes extremely impaired when driving while fatigued. Drivers may negotiate around activated (or gates in the down position) to beat an oncoming train.

The LOS at both the existing North Allen Road crossing and at the proposed University Street crossing is expected to operate at an acceptable LOS A. As such, excessive delay is not likely to encourage reckless behavior from motorists on either roadway. However, some recommendations for improvements at both locations have been made to address safety concerns. They are discussed below.

**Table 3: Railroad Grade Crossing Vehicle Delay and Queues at the Existing North Allen Road Grade Crossing
(Existing and Proposed Analysis)**

	No. of Lanes	ADT	Avg. Train Speed (mph)	Trains per Day¹	Avg. Train Length (feet)²	Blocked Crossing Time per Train (min)	Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle (min)	Max Vehicle Queue	No. of Vehicles Delayed per Day	Average Delay for all Vehicles (sec)	Level of Service
North Allen Road Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	1	17,383	6	2	400	1.26	1.85	20	15	0.20	A
North Allen Road Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	1	16,063	6	2	400	1.26	1.40	18	14	0.15	A
North Allen Road Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	2	17,383	6	2	400	1.26	1.85	20	30	0.39	A
North Allen Road Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	2	16,063	6	2	400	1.26	1.40	18	28	0.29	A

¹: Includes all events requiring gate closings: train crossings, moving trains, maintenance work, etc.

²: Average train length: 2 trains per day at 400 ft each

Table 4: Railroad Grade Crossing Vehicle Delay and Queues at the Proposed University Street Grade Crossing

	No. of Lanes	ADT	Avg. Train Speed (mph)	Trains per Day ¹	Avg. Train Length (feet) ²	Blocked Crossing Time per Train (min)	Crossing Delay per Stopped Vehicle (min)	Max Vehicle Queue	No. of Vehicles Delayed per Day	Average Delay for all Vehicles (sec)	Level of Service
Univ. St Traffic-S. of RR Tracks	4	8,266	6	2	400	1.26	0.75	5	15	0.16	A
Univ. St Traffic-N. of RR Tracks	2	7,858	6	2	400	1.26	0.86	9	14	0.18	A

¹: Includes all events requiring gate closings: train crossings, moving trains, maintenance work, etc.

²: Average train length: 2 trains per day at 400 ft each

CONCLUSIONS

Based on traffic delay analysis, the following conclusions and recommendations are made concerning the proposed railroad crossing:

- The Highway-Rail Grade Crossing sign, commonly identified as the Crossbuck sign, should be installed on each University Street approach. The details of the signs can be found in Part 8 of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Millennium Edition.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (100 ft) sign should be installed on the southwest drive to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing on University Street soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the proposed University Street grade crossing and the northeast and northwest driveways (50 ft and 30 ft, respectively) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (nine vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on each driveway.
- Essentially no storage exists between the proposed tracks and the northwest driveway on University Street. Consideration for closure of this drive should be given. As the traffic volume on University Street grows, relocating the northeast driveway to the north to have a minimum of 200 ft distance from the centerline of the proposed railroad crossing could be considered.
- Based on the low amount of projected train traffic on the proposed railroad extension, combined with the low operating speed of the train the MUTCD does not warrant any active traffic control device at the proposed University Street crossing. However, if there is no illumination at the grade during the night hours, installing an active control device such as Flashing-Light signals could be considered.
- A Storage Space sign supplemented by a word message storage distance (65 ft) sign should be installed on the closest northeast drive on North Allen Road to warn driveway left-turn users making a turn that they will encounter a highway-rail grade crossing soon after making the turn.
- Given the short distance between the North Allen Road grade crossing and the closest northeast drive (65 ft) and the anticipated maximum vehicle queue (18 vehicles) to the north of the tracks, a proper traffic control device (Stop Sign) should be installed on the driveway.